

THE CORNHILL



No. 1012

Summer, 1957

MAGAZINE

	PAGE
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES	v
INTERMEZZO (Autobiography) .. <i>by Richard Church</i>	227
THE TRUE PRIMITIVE <i>by Elizabeth Taylor</i>	244
A SONG FROM THE GILBERT ISLANDS (<i>Illustrated</i>) <i>by Arthur Grimble</i>	254
POEMS <i>by May Sarton</i>	263
TRUMPETS OFF (A Story) <i>by Celia Dale</i>	265
FRAGMENTS OF A MEXICAN JOURNAL <i>by Lesley Blanch</i>	277
EACH TO HIS HOUSE (A Story) .. <i>by Hilary Gray</i>	288
HAMILTON ON VOLCANOES (<i>Illustrated</i>) <i>by Oliver Warner</i>	292

JOHN MURRAY, 50 ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON, W.1

At present the CORNHILL appears quarterly and will publish occasional Supplements containing work of up to 35,000 words in length.

The Editor asks that all contributions should be addressed to him at 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1, and accompanied by a stamped envelope.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

RICHARD CHURCH, poet, novelist, critic, was a Civil Servant for many years and his trilogy of novels, *The Porch*, *The Stronghold*, *The Room Within* (Dent), gives a portrait of Civil Service life. His latest novel is *The Dangerous Years*, his latest collection of poems, *The Inheritors*, was published in 1957 (Heinemann). Episodes of childhood in Battersea, later a part of his autobiography *Over the Bridge* (Heinemann), first appeared in the CORNHILL in 1954. This book was a Book Society choice and was awarded the *Sunday Times* Gold Medal. The further autobiographical episode published in this issue will be included in *The Golden Sovereign* to be published (Heinemann) this autumn.

ELIZABETH TAYLOR has written several novels, including *At Mrs. Lippincott's*, *A View of the Harbour*, *A Wreath of Roses*, *A Game of Hide-and-Seek*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Hester Lily* and (just published) *Angel* (Peter Davies).

SIR ARTHUR GRIMBLE: colonial administrator, broadcaster and author of *A Pattern of Islands*. Just before his death he completed the sequel, *Return to the Islands*, which will be published this autumn (John Murray).

MAY SARTON, writer, poet and lecturer, is of Belgian extraction but her family are now American. She is a lecturer in English at Harvard, has won poetry awards in the United States and in 1953 a travel Fellowship from Bryn Maur. Amongst her books are: *The Bridge of Years*, *Shadow of a Man* (Cresset Press), *A Shower of Summer Days* (Hutchinson), *Faithful are the Wounds* (Gollancz) and her new novel, *The Birth of a Grandfather*, will be published later this year.

CELIA DALE, novelist; her works include *The Least of These* and more recently *Trial of Strength* (Cape). She is the wife of Guy Ramsay, critic and author.

LESLEY BLANCH, writer, traveller and artist, wife of the French author and diplomat, Romain Gary. *The Wilder Shores of Love* was a Book Society choice. Her most recent book, *Round the World in Eighty Dishes* (John Murray), is an account of culinary travel: her book *Harriette Wilson and her Memoirs* will be published this autumn (Gryphon)

HILARY GRAY trained as a librarian, has written several short stories and is now working on a book.

OLIVER WARNER, biographer of Conrad and Marryat (Constable), has just finished *A Portrait of Lord Nelson*, for publication (Chatto & Windus) in 1958, the bi-centenary of Nelson's birth. He is now working on a companion piece, *Sir William Hamilton and the Pleasures of Naples*.

Summer and Early Autumn Novels



EVELYN WAUGH

The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold

Book Society Recommendation—July

12s. 6d. net

Mr Waugh's new book is concerned with an author who suffers from a brief attack of hallucinations. 'It is', says Mr Waugh, 'a state of particular interest to a narrative writer. The reason remains strenuously active but the information on which it acts is delusory.' These emotions have been made the theme of a light novel which should delight all those who live on the border lines of sanity—rather more than half the inhabitants of the kingdom according to medical figures.

EDITH DE BORN

Schloss Felding

September—14s. net

The first of a trilogy of novels which will cover the period from the end of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth. The action here takes place in Imperial Austria, and the life of a vanished aristocracy is recalled, when children were not allowed by their parents to interfere with the serious pleasures of life. Such a child was the narrator, and the story of her physical and emotional development is beautifully told.

JOHN SYMONDS

A Girl Among Poets

September—13s. 6d. net

This new novel by the author of *The Lady in the Tower* and *The Bright Blue Sky* has all the flavour and oddity that we now expect of him. He knows 'the subterranean world of poets' and is well fitted to describe their splendours and miseries.

KENNETH MARTIN

Aubade

October—10s. 6d. net

The author was sixteen when he wrote this first novel last year. It is, however, a book whose merits would be remarkable whatever the author's age: a haunting evocation of one summer in the life of a boy, a story told with delicacy and compassion. Mr L. A. G. Strong writes of it: 'I can't recall a writer under twenty who goes about the major job of a novelist so deftly and with so little fuss.'



CHAPMAN & HALL

Intermezzo

An episode of autobiography

BY RICHARD CHURCH

Ten years have passed since that day in 1900 when the author and his elder brother, Jack, set off over Battersea Bridge in search of goldfish, and since the days of the bicycling expeditions with their parents. These early episodes were published in the CORNHILL (Winter 1954/5) and were included later in the author's enchanting *Over the Bridge*. This new episode of autobiography takes place just after the death of the author's mother whom devotedly he had helped to nurse during a last painful illness. The family unit is broken, perception intensified; music and a new friendship come to the rescue.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

SUMMER came early and took swift hold. I went to the Land Registry every week-day, resuming my lunch-hour explorations with the Titian-haired Arthur Sullivan, either standing to read at the bookshelves of Denny's in The Strand, or Glaishers in High Holborn (the managers seeming to vie with each other in their hospitality toward our hungry intellects), or sitting in the gallery of St. Clement Dane's church, or St. Anne's, Soho, bemused by Bach's mathematical forms, or the lighter confections of Rheinberger and Caesar Franck, while the steak and kidney puddings, previously consumed in a cabmen's eating-house, rumbled round our digestive systems, and in the process temporarily drained our immature brains of blood.

It was a period of weltering purposes, bewilderingments, delusions. It

Intermezzo

was also empty. Although I was swotting (a different activity from studying) for the Civil Service examination, and reading with the utmost recklessness, such authors as Spenser, Oscar Wilde, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Milton, Stevenson, Keats, Shelley and Bret Harte ; putting in a seven-hour day at the Land Registry, and continuing to carry my usual share of the household chores at home, yet my life was empty. I had the sensation of groping my way along a vacant corridor.

Nothing appeared to happen. I was waiting. At the same time, I was being hurled along. I could grasp at passing impressions, but they dissolved at my touch. The home that was no longer a home stood in the flood of this strange, quiet nightmare, but it was a castle of sand, slowly crumbling. The furniture, formerly the anatomy of my accepted universe, became unfamiliar. I found myself sitting alone in the drawing-room, or in my own room, looking around me in surprise, as though I had used the wrong door-key, and were a trespasser there.

I observed a change, too, in myself. I read books in a different way. I was more self-conscious, and no longer lost myself absolutely in the scene, the situation. I looked coolly at the words. Some faculty of alertness, of utter identification, had died. I asked myself, was this what death meant ? Was this how death came home to the living survivors, laying its cemetery in their minds, their hearts ? Grief, then, must be a negative ; loyalty to the memory of the dead little more than a cauterisation. I grieved the more, despairing in the very elusiveness of grief.

With all this, my physical health improved. I was constantly hungry. I was no longer responsible, or proxy, for Mother's suffering. Wherever she was, she did not need me now. My nerves were not drawn to that necessity. In this respect, I was idle. Even prayer, that misplaced and abused exercise, was dropped, as an agent in the puzzle, the cheat.

Everything else, indeed, that might rouse my emotions, re-awakening forces best left alone, was dropped. I could hear the fall, the world-wide subsidence of all sensation, all meaning, as the cosmos I had built around my mother's person collapsed, card by card.

Strangest of all the new sensations, was this uprising of physical

vitality. It was like the tumult of a mob approaching along a deserted street. It affected my mind, making me feel that revolution was in the air. I was half frightened. Could these be my own limbs, that craved for violent movement? Was this warmth racing through my veins, bracing my back and stomach (normally such inert areas), quite acceptable, and to be trusted?

But I did not consciously ask myself these questions. I was only half aware of the changes, as a fisherman idling by the seashore between deep-sea voyages will see, without seeing, that the tide has turned, and is flooding in.

The effect of this enlargement was to drive me out, cycling or walking, obedient to a muscular craving aided by my reluctance to be left alone in the house; a mood obviously shared by Father and Jack, who each went his separate way. We were blown apart, litter from an explosion, part of the wreckage of our home.

Father made an effort, however, to keep things together. He found a woman willing to come in during the mornings to clean up the house, and gave her a door-key so that she could let herself in after we had gone to our day's work. I encountered her one morning, because she had come earlier, to spring-clean the parental bedroom—the all too familiar bedroom. I stared at her powerful arms and heavy bust, as at something abnormal. The blood surged up, over my face and neck. I knew too much of this business; the structure, the ways of womanhood. It still claimed me, this precocious knowledge; but I wanted to escape.

She responded to my equivocal glance, mistaking it for friendliness, and I was quickly made a confidant about her aches and pains, her ailing husband and her five children. I might have been the family doctor, or a parish priest. I murmured something consolatory and fled from the burden.

Father's next step was to seek out old friends. Fatuously pursued, it was to lead him to years of trouble, and also to affect my freedom and development. Its first effect, however, was happy. He and I went one Sunday afternoon—Jack having already gone 'over the hill'—to North Side, Clapham Common, to call on one of his Post Office cronies.

This was a musician named Harry Bridge; semi-professional,

because in his off-duty hours, he played the viola in the local 'Shakespeare Theatre' orchestra on Lavender Hill, and also conducted an amateur orchestra which, at some national festival, had been warmly praised by Hans Richter who had shaken this modest English postal worker by the hand, and told him that he was an artist.

So he was ; and a saint as well. He was a modest little figure, worn out by overwork, and distrait through sheer simplicity of spirit. He seemed to be wholly ignorant of the ways of the world, and might have been a character conceived by Hans Andersen, put to music by Humperdinck. His true love was Haydn, though this quiet, reverential passion did not detract from his devotion to his wife Annie. She was even simpler, a gentle soul with a voice like a distant flute, heard through woodlands and hardly distinguishable from the accompanying complaint of doves. She ministered to her Harry, and to their two sons, whom Jack and I had met once or twice during our infancy, they being just two years, respectively, older than us.

Now Father, perhaps with a view to doing something toward our musical interests, sought out this other-world family. We were instantly welcomed, but with no hearty display. The little house in a turning off Clapham Common received us as it were into the eighteenth century. We might have entered Dr. Burney's music-room at Deptford. The air was filled with resin-dust, from the rubbing of bows ; violin, viola, 'cello and 'bass, all the stringed instruments being played in that household.

Nothing was said about our recent loss. Annie Bridge took me by the hand, and made a little murmuring sound, as of a bee approaching an isolated flower. I could distinguish no word, but instantly I was comforted.

We discovered that the two boys were already professionals, both having won scholarships to the Royal Academy of Music, the elder for the 'cello, and the younger, Bertie, for the double-bass. Bertie, two years senior to me, was a male version of his mother Annie ; gentle, simple-hearted, almost over-wrought with sympathy for all living things—and quietly, deeply religious. He was already playing third 'bass in Covent Garden Opera House, and was remarked in the profession as a master of his instrument.

The elder brother, the 'cellist, was a handsome fellow, touched by

a gentle frown of perplexity, as though living in dread of being parted from his violoncello and bow, a fatality that would have made him wholly inarticulate and helpless. Gentleness emanated from him, too, as from the rest of this extraordinary family, but only to form a kind of mist, through which he could be but dimly perceived as a personality, while he must have seen the world through it as no more than a vague series of irrelevant masses, remotely connected with his music.

Father and I stayed to tea, that June afternoon, and Bertie and I talked together, recalling how in our distant infancy, we had played with his toy trains. Then music engulfed us, and for the first time in my life I listened to the earlier of the two trios by Schubert.

While the meal was in progress, Harry Senior sitting not at the head of the table but beside his Annie, with only a tea-cosy between them, over which from time to time she reached to place a buttered crumpet on his plate, the while glancing at him with reproachful affection, on account of his absent-minded toying with his food ; Harry Junior exactly emulating his father, sitting half-turned from the table, one elbow on it, his hand buried in his long brown hair, meditation weighing on his eyelids like sleep. In the midst of all this, and to the interruption of my Father's monologue upon the intricacies of the route between Stow-on-the-Wold and the Wye Valley, there entered an addition to the party.

He was Old Harry's brother, Uncle Charlie. No two close relatives could have been more unlike. Whereas Old Harry was small, narrow chested, with lined features set in the cast of gentle abstraction, and tinged with pallor over brow and cheek, Charlie was stout, rubicund, bald. He was also a little irascible.

I instantly sensed that something was amiss. The harmony of this musical family did not extend outside the home to its further members. Annie fluttered in nervous apprehension, and I strongly suspected her of saying, almost aloud ' Oh, dear ! ' as she gathered herself together in order to fetch a boiling kettle from the kitchen, to re-fill the teapot and lay another cup and saucer. As she passed her husband, beside whom I sat, I heard her whisper, " Now Harry, you're not to say anything ! Don't start it ! "

But it was young Harry who seemed most perturbed. He looked

Intermezzo

up at his Uncle Charlie, and his already lined young forehead crinkled like a concertina. The sleepiness left his eyes, and I could see that he was prepared for battle.

All this mystified me. I was uncomfortable, for like my brother, I hated controversy and argument, loud quarrels or bickering.

No hostility broke out, however. The truce lasted through tea, and Uncle Charlie and my father engaged in a hearty dialogue about other colleagues. It appeared that Charlie also was a Post Office man, and had formerly worked with Father and Old Harry in Hobart Place, Victoria, until the family feud caused him to apply for a transfer to another district office, out of daily contact with his brother.

Later in the evening there entered a third brother, very like Old Harry in appearance, but deaf and dumb. This disability had prevented him from entering the Post Office as a sorter, but he made a safe living as a wood-carver. A panel of his work, fruit and foliage in the manner of Grinling Gibbons, hung over the door of the sitting-room where we were all gathered at tea (a double-room with folding-doors removed).

The meal finished under some restraint, and Uncle Charlie wiped his head with his handkerchief, wheezed irritably, and suggested "a little music." I saw Annie tremble. This was the moment. Then the genius of compromise shone from the younger son Bertie, the 'bass player. He suggested the Schubert trio, and there was immediate assent. We left Annie to clear away the tea things, and withdrew to the front half of the sitting-room, where stood a boudoir grand by Broadwood (*not* the spurious Broadwood-White), and a small copse of music-stands. What with the bulk of the piano, the splay legs of the stands, the 'bass lying on its side and the 'cello (with extended peg) lolling over an arm-chair, little room was left either for performers or audience. I sat on the kerb of the fireplace, and Bertie joined me, for he seemed eager to further our acquaintance.

Our conversation was enthusiastic, for we were discovering, moment by moment, mutualities of interest in music, and country matters, and religious adventure. I quickly found that he did not read much, and that my self-dedication to poetry was something of a novelty to him, which he found endearing but incomprehensible. But he respected it, and said so. I needed no more encouragement. A proud

gratitude welled up and almost overwhelmed me. I must have shewn it, for he smiled and nodded at me, exactly as his mother had done over our bereavement. The evening sunlight flickered through the lace curtains and hovered like butterflies around his handsome head. I could hardly see him, because my eyes were suffused. I had to take off my spectacles and wipe them, thus changing the scene to a mass of glowing shapes, the sunlit Broadwood, the gilt music-stands, the vague figures of the performers, or rather those about to perform.

For the music of Schubert had not yet begun to flow. The score was being handed out, examined, commented on, hummed at, while discussion went on as to who should play which instrument. It was finally decided that as Bertie was in deep conversation with me, he should not be called upon. Young Harry sat down at the pianoforte, perplexity still written on his brow. He wiped his hands with his handkerchief, tucked it up his cuff, and leaned forward to examine the score, frowning still more as he did so, as though to suggest that what with the mysteries of music on the one hand, and the distractions of having to contend with everyday life, on the other, he was likely at any moment to resign the contract made so shyly at his birth, by dear Annie and Old Harry.

This last was to play the violin-part, and for that purpose he now had to make up his mind which of two ready instruments he should use. Three were examined, but one was out of court as being quite distasteful to him. How it had got into the house, he explained somewhat querulously, no one knew, but he suspected his brother Charlie of having bought it at an auction. Charlie accepted the accusation meekly, or absent-mindedly, for he was busy fitting a string to an out-of-commission 'cello, a garishly red instrument for which he plainly had little respect. But Young Harry allowed nobody to touch his own violoncello, and there it lolled, a spoilt darling, ready for utterance, still in the main arm-chair.

With a grimace that drew the muscles of his mouth sharply, as from toothache, Young Harry touched a key to give the tuning note. He played a few chords—and rapture flooded over me as though a caress had surprised me, touching the hair at the back of my head. The velvety tone of the Broadwood was softer, more woody, than

Intermezzo

that of our Klingmann ; but it compensated by coming from an open grand—with that instant contact—which is always just lacking in an upright piano.

I paused in my excited flow of conversation with Bertie, and he looked at me, half enquiring, but wholly patient, for I believe that he was letting the contents of my speech flow over him. Our friendliness, our mutual warmth, were enough, though most of my references to things and persons literary and philosophic were unintelligible to him.

This sudden pause in our conversation resulted in one of those social silences which are said to occur either at twenty minutes past, or twenty minutes to the hour. A marble clock, with figures of a blacksmith and a husbandman supporting it, affirmed the superstition. The time was twenty to seven, and the sun at that same moment withdrew from the room, leaving us to contract our range of consciousness, and to concentrate upon the universe of the ear, privy from the distractions of that of the eye. Dusk was falling.

The effect of the silence was galvanic upon Young Harry. He suddenly returned to the current world, a spasm shook him, and he leaned across the keyboard of the piano, his brown eyes alight with a touch of malice, and said to his Uncle Charlie. "And are you coming to hear Tannhäuser on Thursday?"

Annie was out in the kitchen, and thus no feminine influence was present in the darkening music-room to prevent the explosion that followed. Uncle Charlie struggled to his feet, bow in one hand, the other hand grasping the reddish 'cello as though it were a turkey which he had just strangled. His face grew purple, his eyes stared glassily.

"You're young," he gasped. "Harry, you don't know yet. You haven't lived long enough. But people like him come between father and son ; they are blasphemers. They crucify all that is good and sacred in music. We've had this out before. It's upset our family. I've been kept away from you all—and now, the first time I come to see what can be done, you say this to me ! I tell you, Young Harry, and you're my own nephew ; I tell you once and for all, that I'll have nothing to do with this wicked charlatan, or his damnable works. Let them bring him to Covent Garden, with his

Ring of the Nibble-lungens, and his Tan-houzers ! It doesn't make him a musician ; it doesn't change my belief that you and Bertie are being ruined as instrumentalists by playing his horrible works, with their wicked tricks and fraudulent discords. It's enough to make me weep !”

And he did weep, to our intense embarrassment. The tears gathered in those bulging, glassy eyes, like blood out of stone, and Old Harry, with his fiddle under his arm, trembling and quavering, muttered over and over again.

“ Oh, come now, Charlie. There's no call for all this. The boys are young. You can't expect—old heads on young shoulders——”

What might have happened if Annie had not returned to the party, I dared not think. Indeed, I was incapable of thinking, for the storm appeared to be blowing all round me. Bertie had put his hand on my knee, in concern over my distress.

“ They don't understand,” he pleaded with me. “ You can't expect them to. It's all so big—everything different—but they can't see that it had to come. Verdi has said all that could be said in the old forms. But Wagner is another world. The more I play his work, the more I learn. He's more like a god than a man. But what's the use of arguing about him—quarrelling from him ?”

“ Now, now,” quavered Annie, “ what is all this ? Why haven't you begun your music ? Who began it *this* time ?”

She looked reprovingly, but with infinite timidity, from one to another of her menfolk, the four musicians (two of them also post-office sorters), and I could have sworn that she shook a finger, as in a kindergarten of naughty children. “ Now come along, Harry dear,” she said to her husband. “ Just you get along with it.”

But Young Harry, who had caused the disturbance, was too upset to settle down at the keyboard. He flung back his hair, looked at his uncle accusingly, and stood up.

“ No !” he cried. “ I can't take the piano part after that. You'd better. I'll play the 'cello.”

And he picked up his own instrument, bent over it, his hair almost sweeping the strings, and began to tune it, screwing the keys, and his own features, simultaneously, as in a kind of nervous agony.

“ Uncle Charlie's old-fashioned,” whispered Bertie to me, leaning

Intermezzo

across the fireplace. "Father doesn't really understand Wagner either, but he's more tolerant. That's due to Haydn, whom he worships. Haydn was an experimenter too. Father is kind of—of *prepared* for the change, you see."

His further words were drowned under an expostulation of tuning up, this time with a still angry and lachrymose Uncle Charlie at the piano, giving the note. Old Harry was trembling at one knee, and from moment to moment his head nodded violently in the aftermath of the storm. I gathered, however, from Bertie's innocent stage-whisper that Uncle Charlie had not been near the house for six months, and that when his brother had refused to take sides in the previous quarrel—though his tastes were known—Charlie had put in a request to be moved from the South West District Post Office in Hobart Place in order to remove himself from even this remote contagion with Wagner.

Schubert bowed himself into the room through an atmosphere of constraint. His boyish gaiety, and bubbling outburst of good humour, were quite incongruous with the expression of set obstinacy on the face of the pianist, the worried anxiety of the fiddler, and the anger of that of the 'cellist.

But that made no difference to the movement of the music ; music that came running up the shore round me, sunlit, foaming out of the deep, as playful yet strong as a flooding tide, sun-drenched, and pungent out of the mid-ocean of genius.

I leaned forward, half-losing my nervous distress, and clasping my hands between my knees, stared at the whitening knuckles, unaware that my fingers were aching, conscious only that I was moving into another and larger chamber in the house of music. And I was conscious, too, that I was here without brother Jack, and that this was an intrusion I could not help, since he had gone off on another pursuit that demanded all, perhaps more, than he could give.

* * * *

The excitement of this new friendship that suddenly had come to flower out of a seed set long ago in childhood, made me insistent to share it with Jack. I could see there was so much to enchant him, lighten his melancholy temperament, and even to dilute the intensity

Richard Church

of his love-passion, in this family circle where music was the daily bread.

One Sunday, when it was inconvenient for him to go 'over the hill,' and Father was absent again—somewhat mysteriously—with his Humber motor-cycle, plus the sociable sidecar (which I had helped to assemble), I persuaded Jack to come with me to Clapham Common. The occasion made us both shy, because we realised that this was the first time we had been out together since Mother left us.

The afternoon, of a sunny day in July, was hot, and the streets of suburban London were deserted. A placid smell of dust and privet hedges charged the air with laziness and sleep. We had been busy during the morning, cleaning up the house while Father roasted the joint. Now he had departed, blurting down Half Moon Lane, temporarily ruffling the silence of the afternoon. But it closed again after him, like pond water settling over a flung stone.

Hardly a sound disturbed the neighbourhood when Jack and I set out at a little before three o'clock. The elms in Half Moon Lane stood in the dark mantle of their own shadows. From one of them floated the lifting murmur of a pigeon's voice, and the abrupt stop. The suburb was digesting its Sunday dinner, with the *News of the World* over its head as a shield from the light. Even the light itself was subdued.

Jack and I walked toward Clapham, breaking our reserve by shy, generalised remarks as though we were strangers. Indeed we were so, for we had come together again for the first time since Love, and then Death had entered our home, and shewn it to be so fragile.

I watched my brother while we walked. The intensity of his emotions, concentrated now upon the timid and inexperienced person of the girl whose cool beauty and reserve had thrown him into a perpetual state of enthralled frustration, which even her gentle loyalty could not assuage, had fined down the sufficiently sparse flesh. He was more than ever like Savonarola. I almost had the illusion of seeing his great beak of a nose protruding from under a cowl, his eyes invisible.

He stooped as he walked, and a little hunched, guarding something.

"Don't you dare to fall in love," he said suddenly, as we approached Brixton.

Intermezzo

"Why?" I asked, equally as guarded.

"It's torture!"

With that we went on in silence again, but sensibly drawn closer to each other. After awhile I ventured upon some consolation.

"It'll be all right when you're married."

His head drooped a little more forward. "But when—when?" he demanded. "We come out of College this term, and start teaching in September. I shall just be turned twenty-one, and she's only twenty. Her people won't hear of it. You can't blame them."

Then he stopped, turned, and stared at me, deeply, consumingly. I stopped too. It was impossible to pass this barrier of fire.

"And what about *you*? Mother's been gone three months and what is Father doing? Where does he go lately?"

The passionate query meant less to me than to Jack. Father had always been somewhat of an absentee in my life; his enthusiasms remote, his enormous physical vigour unintelligible. I saw now that Jack who had been his companion, though a slightly reserved one, all through the cycling years, was frightened. Perhaps he was trying to shift the burden. After all, he had been the first to break, in 1908, the enclosure of our unique family life, with its involved emotions and interests.

He must have read my thoughts, for he went on, as we resumed our way toward the haven of the Bridges' home, "And there's you. I can't leave you alone: not yet."

I had not contemplated these possibilities. I lived removed from the immediate drama of events and actualities, and thus had little political sense. I had not learned to put two and two together. I was otherwise occupied with the excitements of the dictionary, and the drug of verse. The only reality that I could appreciate was the prospect of a room to myself, somewhere close to the assurance of food and warmth, where I could fulfil my verbal dreams without interruption.

Even now I did not fully grasp what Jack meant. So I said nothing. The idea of being left utterly alone in the world was one I could not entertain, except under the conditions of my monomania. I could desert the world, in order to pursue my purpose: but the world must not desert me.

Richard Church

This self-concern made me respond with some ardour to Jack's words. He was seldom given to demonstration ; signs of affection, or expressions of praise from him loomed up like hillocks on a plain. So though I accepted this surprising gesture in silence, I was inwardly eloquent. I seized him by the arm, and walked along with him for at least a dozen paces. Then I realised that his artesian emotions had sunk back to their normal depth, escaping from my exuberance. The spiritual contact survived, however, and we walked on in silence, or intermittent conversation, very happy together, he in his responsibility for me, I in my faith in him.

The Bridge family made Jack as welcome as they had made Father and me a week or two earlier. Again the Sunday tea-table was spread in the back room, with Annie fluttering like a moth behind the tea-cosy, and Old Harry at her side, dependent upon her even for the conveyance of bread and butter, with bloater-paste, to his plate. He accepted visitors as he accepted the rest of his life's furniture, with an impersonal sweetness. But his character managed to give an assurance, in spite of its distrait habit, that he knew the true value of things and people, and that he would recoil with obstinacy from a fake Stradivarius, as well as from a pretentious friend or musician. I had already noticed how affectionately, though somewhat dismissively, he had received my father. I now saw him accept Jack with a more continuous interest. Throughout tea-time he studied Jack's hands. They appeared to fascinate him.

Meanwhile, my brother warmed up. He sat opposite Old Harry, listening and responding to a technical cross-talk about counterpoint, a subject the two Bridge boys were struggling with in their studies at the Royal Academy. Jack emerged from his cavern and sat there in the full glare of debate, while I amused myself as a listener, trying to count the threads of the argument, and to see them as a living demonstration of the art of counterpoint, the fact being that each enunciation by Jack, after provoking a babel of voices, was repeated by Young Harry lower down the scale of the tea-table.

I realised, too, that throughout my life I had never before seen Jack in other than our own domestic setting. He must have felt the same about me ; but I had nothing to demonstrate. I was in a state of foreboding. Jack's remarks during our walk to Clapham had

Intermezzo

come home to me with belated effect. I watched this still united family of four, and it brought back to my mind the disaster which had crept upon our home, with gradual stealth, and then suddenly struck: only now was I beginning to realise with what shattering force.

After tea, I retreated into a corner, beneath one of these novel phonographs which Young Harry had introduced to the house. It stood on a pedestal above me, its horn sticking out above my head. Young Harry demonstrated it, playing a cylindrical record of Caruso singing an aria from *Il Trovatore*. It sounded like a tiny, far-off voice from fairyland. Harry then showed me Caruso's autograph in his album, embellished by a self-caricature drawn by that warm-hearted master.

All this, however, was but a preamble to the business of the evening, the usual Sunday night quartette playing. Uncle Charlie had not appeared. He was still sulking in his tent, after the last altercation about Wagner. Old Harry accordingly had a suggestion to make, as though it were something utterly unprecedented, an inspiration belatedly showing itself in his autumnal years—that the evening's music should start with one of Haydn's thirty trios for strings.

"There, Harry, and very nice," said Annie, who might not have heard this suggestion every Sunday night for the past twenty-five years.

With his dear wife's encouragement, Old Harry began to explore one of the piles of sheet-music which stood about the room, in the corners, on the chairs and sofa, in and on cabinets, under and on the grand pianoforte. Jack volunteered to help him, and immediately the two were withdrawn from the rest of us, into a world of 'unheard music,' that magic still merely in notation, dumb within the confinement of the staves.

I recognised in Jack's absorbed activity, the power that had so often caught me up in those distant days of childhood, aeons ago; sweeping me on out of my station of day-dreams, only to leave me higher up the slopes of that dangerous range of fantasy.

But more was happening. Jack had stopped sorting over the piles. He was immersed in something particular. I knew by the poise of his whole body that he was concentrating upon one of his enthusiasms.

It was much the same physical stance as that of a kestrel when it halts upon air, its wings spread, and still, yet at the same time vibrant in a lifting intensity, a throb of directed purpose, before the plunge. "Mr. Bridge!" he said; or rather, he commanded.

Conversation died away, and Young Harry nervously lifted the ruby needle from the revolving wax cylinder on the phonograph, thus snatching the voice of Nelly Melba into oblivion.

Jack rose from the floor, still looking at the opened sheets in his hands.

"We ought to play this," he said. He spoke quietly, finally. There could be no denial, no opposition. "I've never heard it, but I've had the score out of the library. It's one of the greatest things I've ever heard."

"You mean *not* heard," said Young Harry, wryly, smiling his whimsical, half-distracted smile.

"This is Brahms at his best," Jack went on soliloquising rather than addressing himself to us. "It's the Piano Trio in C major."

"Dear me, that's very difficult," said Old Harry indulgently, shaking his head to indicate that Brahms was not to blame.

"But it's astounding!" cried Jack. "It's so—so *tense*, with the hesitation of strength in the first movement. I long to hear the effect of that when it's played. It's not easy to follow on the page. But all that comes after; the gaiety of the second movement, and this remote Hungarian music of the *andante*, with the solid peasant dance of the last movement, festive yet tragic. Oh, it suits me, it suits me!"

I stared at him. Never before had I seen him emerge so far. Not even on the occasion when, as a boy of thirteen, he built a steam locomotive that made a record run and then blew up, nearly braining him in the explosion, had Jack shewn himself so triumphant.

Nobody could withstand that force. Within a few minutes, Jack was at the piano, Old Harry at the violin, and Young Harry at the 'cello. One or two differences of view about tempo, a false start, owing to a defective tuning of the fiddle, and then the music launched out into the open, Jack playing from sight, his great nose white, his lips indrawn, the muscles of his cheeks twitching, his silky hair lying lank over the neat skull. I could *feel* the knowledge, instantly

Intermezzo

translating itself from theory to living music, as it flowed from his hands. They appeared to cling to the keyboard, like hungry birds alighting there, for he had devised a muscular stance (after reading an exposition of Tobias Matthay's method) in keeping with his own character, so that much was done with a minimum of effort, the full significance and authority finding expression mostly in what he did *not* do or say.

It was almost a devastating experience for me. I saw, for the first time, my enigmatic brother's personality stripped naked, and I was both awed and charmed. Apart from my wonder at the bravura of playing such a work at sight, I recognised that this particular trio by Brahms, which I have never heard performed since that Sunday in the July of 1910, might have been composed as a prophetic portrait of my brother. He, too, had the passionate reserve, the latent force of lyrical joy and humour, the basis of robust sanity, the sudden soaring up into self-immolation under the prompting of agonised emotional sacrifice.

Bertie and I sat together again during this performance, and I had the illusion that we were kneeling side by side at a sacrament. The wry humour of the last movement (*allegro giocoso*) must have touched Jack at the very core of his nature, for he played it as though he were possessed, and actually broke into a sardonic chuckle, in time with the heavy beat of the dance rhythm. The sweat glistened on Old Harry's time-tonsure; and Young Harry at the 'cello, at each emphasis of the detached string quavers, gave a rapid bob over his instrument, causing his mane of hair to fly over his face and almost to flick the strings, adding an unwanted pizzicato.

Annie, sitting with her sewing in the back-room, spoke up when the triumph ended.

"That last piece was very loud, Harry dear," she said.

But Old Harry paid no attention to this gentle criticism. He was trying to say something to Jack. Words failed him, however, and after an effort that shook his whole frame, nothing came but tears. They flowed down his withered cheeks, tears of joy, and he groped for his handkerchief to assuage them. But what with this effort, and the attempt to pat my brother on the shoulder, and the burden of the violin and bow still in his hands, he finally gave way, and stood

Richard Church

in helpless confusion, vaguely¹ murmuring, "Good boy! Good boy!"

Young Harry meanwhile resumed the manner of the tired professional, the mask of perplexity over his features, the wrinkles in his forehead, while he tossed back his hair, and worked at a bit of silent stopping up and down the 'cello strings. He was waiting for more.

"Come along, Bertie," he said. "It's time you took a turn. Give us a 'bass solo."

Bertie eased himself up from the fender, where he and I had been sitting like two dumb tailors. The great double-bass was turned round from its dunce-posture, face to the wall in the corner by the doors into the back-room, and Bertie (his fingers and thumbs already slightly splayed at the tips, an occupational distortion) began to tune up. It was like a shire-horse rousing from sleep.

Accompanied by Young Harry, who sat at the piano as professionally as he sat at the 'cello, Bertie gave us a bravura little lyric by Giovanni Bottesini; a touch of love-laughter among the giants. We all made merry over it, and on this note of comedy over the pathetic emotions of the instruments that, like Atlas, carry the sphere of music—the double-bass, the bombardon, the bassoon, the big drum, Jack and I left, with the assurance that the home was always open to us, Old Harry seeing us to the door and still trying in vain to say something to Jack about his miraculous bit of sight-reading. He patted Jack again on the shoulder, before closing the door.

"Nice old boy," said Jack, walking glumly beside me.

The True Primitive

BY ELIZABETH TAYLOR

LILY had not considered culture—as a word or anything else—until she fell in love. As soon as that happened, it, culture, descended on her. It was as if all the books Mr. Ransome had ever read were thrown at her one after the other—Voltaire, Tolstoi, Balzac. The sharp names came at her, brutal spondees, brutally pronounced. She thought, though, that she hated the sound of Dostoievski most of all. “Yes, Dad,” Mr. Ransome’s two sons continually said, agreeing to rate Zola higher than Dickens if he wished them to, promising to remember what he had told them about Michelangelo. Painters’ names were also part of the attack, but Lily thought they sounded gentler. She had felt curiosity about someone called Leonardo when first she heard him mentioned, and had wondered if he were Harry’s cousin. When she asked Harry he laughed and referred her to his father, which meant three-quarters of an hour wasted, sitting in the kitchen listening, and then it was too late for them to go for their walk. Trembling with frustrated desire, she had learnt her lesson; she asked no more questions and sat sullenly quiet whenever the enemy names began again.

Only winter courting seemed to be allowed: then, with the Thames Valley giving off impenetrable vapours or taking in day, after day, torrents of rain until the river rose and spread over the fields, Harry was free to go out with her; except, of course, for his two evenings at the Art School. They held hands coming back in the bus from the cinema, kissed beneath dripping trees in the muddy lane, choked and whispered in the fog.

“Silly notion, venturing out tonight,” Mr. Ransome would tell them. “You’ve no right, letting her catch her death, Harry.”

“I think it’s easing up now,” Lily would say. “Just the clearing-up shower. And a spot or two of rain doesn’t do anyone any harm.”

Elizabeth Taylor

Mr. Ransome, with a daunting-looking book open in front of him, would be hurriedly unfolding his spectacles.

"We ought to be going," Lily whispered.

"Man is a political animal," boomed Mr. Ransome, wanting to throw as many words at them as he could before they escaped, but Lily had gone, was through the scullery and already standing in the wet garden and Harry sent an apologetic smile back at his father and followed her.

"Good Lord," said Lily. "Once he gets going."

"He's a wonderful old man," Harry said.

"You're both afraid of him, I think—you and Godfrey."

"We *respect* him," Harry said sententiously. "He's been a good father and since Mother died he has no one to read to in the evenings. He misses that."

'She did the best thing, dying,' Lily thought.

* * * * *

Mr. Ransome was a lock-keeper. He and his sons lived in a red-brick cottage at the side of the lock. On hot summer's afternoons, the garden was what people going through in their boats called a riot of colour. The primary colours assaulted the eye—salvias, geraniums, lobelias, calceolarias were made all the more dazzling by everything being whitewashed that Mr. Ransome could lay his brush on—flower-tubs, step-edges, the boulders round flower-beds, the swinging chains round the little lawns. In winter-time, it seemed that it could not really have been so bright.

Now, when all the locks down the river were closed, the cottage was lost in a cauldron of steam and the sad sound of the weir came drearily through the fog. Mr. Ransome wondered how Harry and Lily could prefer the sodden lanes to a nice fire and a book to read beside it. He read so much about great passions, of men and women crossing continents because of love, and enduring hardship and peril, not just the discomforts of a dark, wet night—but he could not see Harry and Lily go out without feeling utter exasperation at their fecklessness.

"It will be lovely when the summer comes," Lily sometimes said; but Harry knew that it would not be, if by 'lovely' she meant they would have long evenings together in the golden meadows or walking

The True Primitive

along the towing-path. "He does like us to get out with our sketching, Godfrey and me," he said.

"I don't mind. We can go miles away. You can sketch with one hand and I'll sit beside you and hold the other."

"We couldn't very well do that, you see, because Dad likes to come out with us."

"I can't think why you bother with it when you've got such a nice job."

Harry knew why he bothered. His father, self-taught painter, had once had a picture hung in a local exhibition—an oil-painting, moreover. "I jib at nothing," he had explained. The bright, varnished scene hung in the parlour now. "It was not for sale," he said, when no one bought it. Jibbing at nothing, he had used a great deal of paint and had, in some way, caught the hard, venomous colours of his own garden. 'The Towing Path of A Sunday' was inscribed carefully on the frame. The white chains stood out thickly, like icing piped on the canvas; the chestnut-trees had pink cones of blossom stuck about them and dropped down sharp ovals of shadow on the emerald grass. "If I had had tuition," Mr. Ransome so often said. He would see to it, he added, that his sons should not look back and have to say the same. In their earliest days they had been given paint-boxes and sketching-blocks: he had taken the boys to London to the National Gallery and shown them the Virgin of the Rocks and, standing in front of it, lectured them on Leonardo. They had not known which was more painful—their embarrassment or their shame at their own disloyalty in suffering it. Young as they were at the time, they realised that he was much stared at—the thin, fierce man with his square beard and so old-fashioned clothes—but they could not help feeling that he deserved it, booming away as he did in the echoing gallery. They even began to think that he expected to be noticed and took pleasure from it.

Harry and Godfrey, articted in respectable offices in the nearby town, were not yet quite a disappointment to him; for many great men mature late, their father reminded them, reach their height after middle age: Voltaire, for one. They went on with their art classes at evening school and were painstaking enough in their desire to please; but, sometimes, looking at them and then at their feeble

paintings, Mr. Ransome could not help thinking that passion was missing from them.

'They are not on fire,' he mourned. 'As I have been.'

Then Harry met Lily and seemed, to his father, to be less on fire than ever. "But it will come," he encouraged his sons. It must come. What had been in him so powerful a desire, so bitterly a failed attempt, could not be wasted, must be passed on, and in greater strength, too, if things were to turn out as he considered just.

Lily, impinging on his plan with her sly, mincing manner, her pout and her impatient sighs, was the eternal female enemy. He had built a bastion, a treasure-house for his sons, with all the great names they had heard from the cradle, the learning he had struggled for, to make their inheritance. It had come too easily, he realised now, and Harry would rather spend an evening talking inanities, lowering his mind to Lily's level. His attitude towards her was vexing, suggesting that he was willing, eager, to learn something from her, and even that she might be able to teach it: suppliant, receptive, he was with her; yet it was surely for him to instruct, who knew so much, and dominate, being a man, and to concede, whatsoever he felt inclined to concede; not beg for favours.

Mr. Ransome thought of his own happy married life—the woman, so gentle and conciliatory, listening to him as he read. Into those readings he had put the expression of his pleasure at being able to share with her the best he had discovered. She had sat and sewed and, when she raised her eyes to look for her scissors, she would also glance across at him and he, conscious of her doing so, would pause to meet this glance, knowing that it would be full of humble gratitude. She had never been able to comprehend half of what he had offered her, she had muddled the great names and once dozed off after a few pages of Stendhal; but something, he thought, must have seeped into her, something of the lofty music of prose, as she listened, evening after evening of her married life. Now he missed her and so much of the sound of his own voice that had gone with her.

How different was Lily. The moment he began to read aloud, or even to quote something, down came her eyelids to half-mast. An invisible curtain dropped over her and behind it she was without any response, as if heavily drugged. He would have liked to stick

The True Primitive

pins in her to see if she would cry out : instead, he assaulted her—indecently, she thought, and that was why she would not listen—with Cicero and Goethe, Ibsen and Nietzsche and a French poet, one of his specials, called Bawdyleer. Having removed herself, as it were, she would then glance at the clock, wind a curl round her finger and suddenly let it spring back against her cheek. Distracted by this, Harry would murmur, "Yes, Dad, I remember you telling us." So Mr. Ransome had lost them both. 'Come here,' Lily seemed to be enticing his son. 'Come behind my invisible curtain and we can think of other things and play with my hair and be alone together.'

Sometimes, but very rarely, Mr. Ransome would manage to catch her unawares and force one of the names on her before she had time to bring down the curtain. Then her manner was rude and retaliatory instead of vague. "And who, pray, is Dostywhat's-is-name when he's at home?" She knew that Mr. Ransome was her enemy and felt not only malice in his attitude towards her, but something she might have defined as obscenity if she had known the meaning of the word.

He—for he was at heart puritanical—had once or twice delighted to indulge in a bout of broad-mindedness ; for she should learn that he and some of the great thinkers of the world could face the truth unflinchingly and even some of the words the truth must be described in. To the pure, he said, all things are pure : he watched Lily's look of prim annoyance, implying that to her they obviously were not. He was defeated, however, by the silence that fell—Lily's and his son's ! His remark, made to seem blatant by being isolated and ignored, repeated itself in his own head and he felt his cheeks and brow darkening. He did not want to appear to have any impurity in his own mind and quickly bent down and rearranged the coals on the fire.

The spring was beginning ; the puddles along the rutted lanes were blue, reflecting the bright sky, and lilac-trees in cottage-gardens bore buds as small as grape-pips. Although the darkness fell later, the interval of daylight after tea was of no use to Lily, for Mr. Ransome had his two sons out, white-washing and weeding and trimming. "We shall have no time to do it once the season has begun," he said.

Elizabeth Taylor

"But what about us?" Lily asked Harry.

"I can't help but what give him a hand of an evening. It wouldn't be right to leave it all to Godfrey."

"It sounds as if the summer's going to be just as bad as the winter."

All along, Harry had known it would be worse.

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In the summer, the lock was always full, boats jostled together, smart women in motor launches stared through their dark glasses at men in rowing-boats wearing braces and with knotted handkerchiefs on their heads: in the narrowness of the lock they were all resentful of their proximity to one another, and were glad, when the water had finished rising or falling, to see the gates opening slowly. The locks were an ordeal to be negotiated, not made easier by the passers-by on the tow-path who stopped to watch them lying exposed below and hoped that they would ram their craft into the gates, or take the paint off one of the white launches.

Steamers came through at intervals and then the lock was a well of noise with someone thumping at the piano in the saloon and cheery messages thrown from deck to towing-path; glasses of beer were held up to tantalise and the funny man of the party, wearing a yachting cap, sang 'A life on the ocean wave is better than going to sea.'

The pretty stretch of river, with its willows hanging down to the water and the brilliance of the lock-garden, brought artists, with folding stools and easels, who took up much of Mr. Ransome's time. Such an old character they thought him, forgetting—as, of all people, the English should not—that characters are encouraged at the cost of their families' destruction. He showed them his own painting of the same scene and they were enraptured: they called him a true primitive and talked of the Douanier Rousseau.

On summer's evenings, after days of advising these amateur artists, talking about himself, bringing in a great deal about Leonardo, Mr. Ransome behaved as if he had been drinking too much. He boasted, belaboured his sons with words and then, from too much excitement, surrendered to self-pity. It suddenly seemed to him that he had wasted his life: he had seen this on the face of one stranger after another. 'You!' they had been thinking, 'a man who has all the

The True Primitive

great Masters at his finger-tips and can summon from memory one thundering phrase after another, who would expect to find you in such a backwater, living so humbly ?'

"You two, my sons, shall make up for me," he told them. "Then I have not lived in vain." "'I am the teacher of athletes,'" he intoned. "'He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own proves the width of my own. He most knows my style who learns under it to destroy the teacher.'"

"Yes, Father," said his sons.

"Walt Whitman," he added, giving credit where credit was due.

Lily, who had given up working in a shop to become a laundress, now had Saturday afternoons free. The full significance of this she told Harry when they were lingering over, postponing from minute to minute, their farewell embrace in the dark lane near her home. To draw apart was so painful to them that, as soon as they attempted it, they suffered too much and flew together again for comfort.

"It must be gone eleven," she said. "Dad's tongue will curdle the milk. But guess what, though. Did you realise ?"

"Realise what ?" he mumbled, and lifted her hair from her shoulders and kissed underneath it, along the back of her neck, with busy little nibbling kisses. In a curious and contradictory way, she felt that he was so intent on her that she no longer existed.

"Why Saturday afternoons, of course," she said. "You'll be free : now I'll be free as well." She could not help noticing that the kissing stopped at once.

"Well, you do know weekends in the season I have to give Dad a hand," Harry said.

"It isn't the season yet. We'll have a fortnight before that. I can meet you any time after dinner. Sooner the better," she whispered and raised herself on tiptoe and put her warm mouth against his. He was unhappy and she became angry.

"Say about tea-time," he suggested.

"Why not earlier ?"

She knew, although of course she could not see, that he was blushing.

"Ever since we were little, Dad's liked us to be together on Saturday afternoons."

"What for, pray ?"

"Just to have a quiet time together. It's a family custom."

Now she could feel him blushing.

"If you ask me he's round the bend," she said loudly. "And even if you don't ask me, he is."

She pushed Harry away and began to walk down the lane towards her home. He followed her. "And so are you," she added. She did not turn her head as she spoke, but the words came back to him clearly. "No wonder that girl Vera Webster gave up going out with Godfrey. She could see the way the wind was blowing. 'Dad likes this and Dad likes that.' I'm sick and tired of Dad and one of these days I'll tell him so. 'You and your Bawdyleer,' I'll say, 'you boring old . . .'"—her voice rose and trembled—" 'codger,'" she cried. "And you, too." She had reached her gate and she threw it open and hurried up the path.

"Saturday tea-time, then?" he called after her anxiously.

"Saturday nothing," she shouted back, and she lifted the latch and went in boldly to face her father's sarcasm.

"You're in early this morning," he said. "The milkman hasn't been yet."

* * * * *

The next day her beautiful anger had dissolved. She had enjoyed it while she indulged in it, but now her words haunted and alarmed her. Perhaps they had meant the end of Harry's love for her and of all her hopes. Her future life with him dissolved—a whole council-house full of day-dreams; trousseau, wedding-presents, pots and pans, dainty supper-dishes, baby-clothes, cradle, even a kitten asleep on a cushion. She imagined Harry going to work and then on to his evening class, his head tilted proudly back, the stain of anger on his cheeks. The day after would be Saturday and if it turned out that he had taken her at her furious word, she could not endure to go on living.

"Not going out with Harry?" her mother asked her, when Lily began to wash her hair at the kitchen sink on Saturday afternoon.

"I think love's sweet song has run into a few discords," her father said. "Very hoity-toity words coming up the path the night before last."

The True Primitive

Lily poured a jug of water over her head and so her tears were hidden.

By four o'clock her hair was quite dry. Harry had not come. She was restless and felt herself watched by her mother and father. Soon she decided that there was, after all, nothing to stop her walking along the towing-path for a breath of fresh air. It was a public way and there was no one who could stop her. It would be a sorry thing if, just because of Harry Ransome, she could never walk along the river bank again.

It was a bright and blowy evening. She met no one. At every bend in the lane, she expected to see Harry come hastening, full of apologies, towards her. Then she came to the river and still no one was in sight. The water was high, after the winter's rain, and flowed fast, covered with bubbles, bearing away scum and twigs and last year's leaves. The sound and look of it completed her depression.

With her head turned towards the river and not in the direction of the cottage, she walked along the lock-side. She went on beyond it a little way and then turned and sauntered back. The kitchen window was dark, but from the parlour a light fell faintly through the wooden shutters which had been drawn across the outside of the window. This seemed quite strange to Lily, for it would not be dark for some hours to come and in all the months she had known Harry she had never seen anyone go into the parlour except to fetch a book. She remembered Harry's shame and reluctance when she had tried to make plans for this afternoon and an unreasonable suspicion overtook her that he was in that shuttered room making love to someone, that he had known beforehand that he would be doing so, and knowing, had gone on kissing Lily: though he had had, she admitted, the decency to blush. She stepped quietly onto the little plot of grass and hesitated, glancing round her. There was no one in sight and not a sound except for the river. She went softly across to the window and listened there; but there was a shameful silence from within. Her heart beating with great violence unnerved her and only the extreme tension of her jealousy enabled her to lay her hand on the shutter and move it gently towards her.

The light in the room was not so very bright; but she could see Mr. Ransome not two yards away, standing upright in a strange, stiff

Elizabeth Taylor

pose, with hand on hip and one knee slightly bent, his beard jutting forward and his expression fixed. A rosy glow from an oil-stove close beside him fell over his completely naked body.

Their eyes met. His widened with surprise, Lily's with horror. Then she slammed back the shutter and leant against it for a moment, sick and trembling. Through the narrow slit between the shutters she had not seen the two sons, sitting unwillingly but dutifully behind their easels. Terror, in any case, had quite put the thought of Harry out of her mind. She was afraid that Mr. Ransome would come leaping out of the house after her and chase her down the towing-path, naked and mad as he was, shouting Balzac and Voltaire after her. She summoned all her strength and turned and ran across the lawn, as fast as she could go, away from the cottage, and her legs were as heavy as lead, as if she were running in a nightmare.

A Song from the Gilbert Islands

BY ARTHUR GRIMBLE



THERE were some things that the white man—the Man of Matang—might, with benefit, have left behind him when he first came to the Pacific ; there were others that, had he brought them in greater measure, would have softened the impact and might have provided a stronger bond between the hearts of the strangers and the islanders. Song, it seems to me, was one of these.

I had been speaking to a clever old native of the Gilbert Islands about aeroplanes and wireless. When I had done, he pondered a little, then said, " Kurimbo, it is true the white man can fly ; he can speak across the ocean ; in works of the body he is indeed greater

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Arthur Grimble

than we, but"—his voice rang with pride—"he has no songs like ours, no poets to equal the island singers."

In his ignorance, this old brown warrior thought of us as an utterly material race, destitute of the gift of poetry. We smile with half-pitying tolerance at such unenlightenment—yet how do we think of the islander? Many of us picture him as a savage, pleasant-mannered enough to visit in an idle hour, rather an attractive person altogether and good local colour, but still a savage, having nothing of wisdom or grace in his culture that could possibly command a white man's reverence. As a poet whose work might bear comparison with that of our own master singers, we simply do not think of him. My years among the natives of the Gilbert Islands taught me how mistaken we are.

The islander is a consummate poet. His songs are not the mere barbaric babble of crude emotions that might be expected from men of a culture labelled 'primitive'; they are clear-cut gems of diction, polished and repolished with loving care, according to the canons of a technique as exacting as it is beautiful.

That technique has been elaborated by centuries of singing ancestors who, sincerely convinced of beauty, enlisted every artifice of balance, form and rhythm to express it worthily. The island poet thrills as subtly as our own to the exquisite values of words, labouring as patiently after the perfect epithet. As a result, his songs are literature, though they have remained from the beginning unwritten.

I cannot here give details of the technique that the poet must master, or reproduce the sonorous music of the language he uses. At most, with the help of translated passages, I can hope to convey some faint idea of his results. Translation is the ultimate test of poetry. If, transposed to a foreign idiom and shorn of all its native rhythm, it has still 'a voice to search the heart,' then it is without any doubt true poetry.

Haste, ah, haste thee from the East, my beloved.
Thou hast come out of bondage in Tonga,
Thou art gone like a tempest over the land;
Even the waves of the sea shrink back before thy wrath;
Thou comest in anger, thou Terrible One, yet I fear thee not.

A Song from the Gilbert Islands

Haste, ah, haste thee from the East, my beloved.
Thou art exalted in thine anger, thou art exalted in Tonga ;
Thou treadest upon the clouds—they are tangled about thy feet ;
Thou pluckest down with thy fingers the mountains of Samoa ;
Yet thy hand upon my breast will be gentle as a child's.

Haste, ah, haste thee from the East my beloved.
Thy feet are swifter in the East than the feet of the wind and the rain ;
The noise of thy coming is the tumult of falling skies ;
So that in the face of all men thou art terrible,
Save only in my sight, who love thee, therefore fear not.

That is a song put into the mouth of a fabulous island heroine, whose love has escaped from captivity in Tonga.

Many such songs, of unknown authorship, have been handed down from generation to generation, embedded in the tales of love and adventure that the brown man never tires of telling. In these tales, which are sometimes masterpieces of prose poetry, the transition from narrative verse is always adroitly managed, the hero or heroine breaking into song (as Shakespeare's characters break into rhyme) at moments of high dramatic tension.

Here is a fragment of a dirge from another well-known story ; you are to imagine that a son, while walking with a company of friends, has stumbled unawares upon the body of his murdered father :

SON How still, how still thou liest,

My father, oh, my father, Nakana !

(*Aside*) Alas ! Is the ghost gone out of him ?

FRIENDS The ghost is gone out of him.

SON Nakana ! I call thy name. Thou speakest not Nakana.

Thy eyes look up to me but see me not.

(*Aside*) He stirs not. Will he nevermore stir ?

FRIENDS The ghost is gone out of him.

SON Oh, dead eyes, light again. Behold my tears to brighten you.

Arthur Grimble

Oh, still breast, stir again. Behold my breath to move you.

(*Aside*) He stirs not. Will he nevermore stir?

FRIENDS The ghost is gone out of him.

SON Oh, cold body, take the warmth of my own flesh;

Thou who gavest me life, take back thy gift and live again.

(*Aside*) Will not even this awaken him?

Even so short an extract shows the poet's quality. Here is a most compelling blend of artlessness and art. The perfect and unstrained simplicity of the son's lament is enormously dramatised by a flawless symmetry of structure. In each strophe of the poem the mourner's cry is made the more pathetic by his renewed appeal for comfort to the living, and the pitifulness of the tragedy is stressed by the inexorable reiteration of that refrain 'The ghost is gone out of him.' The poet responsible for these lines was an artist penetrated by his theme, in absolute control of his medium, and informed to his inmost fibre with the magic of form and balance.

And here is a Gilbertese lover singing of his mistress:

How deep are my thoughts as I sit on the point of the land
Thinking of her tonight.

Her feet are luminous over dark ways,

Even as the moon stepping between clouds.

Her shoulders shine like Kaama in the South¹

Her hands, in the sitting dance,

Trouble my eyes as the flicker of stars;

And at the lifting of her eyes to mine I am abashed,

I, who have looked undaunted into the sun.

My friend Taata, who, during my years there, was the greatest living poet of the Gilbert Islands, said to me once, "If I did not with heart and body live the life of my people, how could I sing songs to touch their hearts?"

That was his way of asserting that if poetry is to appeal to the people, it must savour of the salt of the people's life. His theory will not sound greatly amiss to lovers of Burns or Mistral, Chaucer or Hans Sachs; and, right or wrong, it has been the conviction of every poet who ever sang in the Gilbert Islands.

¹ Southern Cross.

A Song from the Gilbert Islands

The singer of the Central Pacific is no aloof or lily-handed dreamer,
who whiles away the languid hours :

In gardens near the pale of Proserpine,

Where only the low lutes of love complain,
And only shadows of wan lovers pine.

He is a toiler, a son of sea and soil, a peasant poet. Hard manual labour is the keynote of his life. If it were not so, he would starve, for on the sunscorched atolls that are the home of his race, there is none of that tropical luxuriance of vegetation that novelists love to describe. There are but two trees that yield him food—the coconut and the pandanus palm—and in that arid soil it is only by incessant travail that he can keep them productive. Every day, too, in every weather he must go out with net or line to wrest, from perhaps the most treacherous seas in all the world, the fish that forms his only other food.

According to Taata, the poet should excel all other men in performance of these labours. Only by becoming a recognised master of the island crafts can he win reverence for his art. His ideal is therefore to be a perfect man, as manhood is conceived in the Central Pacific.

So it comes about that the champion wrestlers and canoe-men, the most valiant warriors, the hardest shark-fishers, the most skilful builders and agriculturalists in the annals of the Gilbertese race have been poets. In these islands, the dreamers of dreams are the men of action too.

It is only when the poet feels the divine spark of inspiration once more stirring within him that he deviates from the ordinary course of village life. Then indeed he neglects his digging and fishing, but only to subject himself to a far sterner discipline. He removes himself to some lonely spot, there to avoid all contact with man or woman. He eats nothing but the flesh of coconuts, and drinks nothing but water.

For three days he thus purges his body of its vicious humours. On the fourth morning he marks out a twelve-foot square on the ground, in some place where he can get a good view of the rising

Arthur Grimble

sun. This is his 'house of song,' wherein he will sit in travail with the poem that is yet unborn. All the next night he squats there, bolt upright, facing east, while the song quickens within him.

Dawn breaks. As the edge of the sun's disc appears over the eastern sea, the poet lifts his hands at arm's-length before him, with palms turned outwards to the rising flame :

"O Sun," he intones, "thou art reborn out of darkness ;
Thou comest out of deep places, thou comest out of
the terrible shadows ;
Thou wast dead, thou art alive again.
O Sun, behold me, help me :
The word of power died in my heart,
Let it be reborn again as thou,
Let it fill me with light as thou,
Let it soar above the shadows,
Let it live !
So shall I be eloquent."

This incantation (age-old inheritance from his magic-loving ancestors) he repeats three times, then rinses his mouth with salt water, thereby making his tongue 'pure for song.' Immediately after this ritual, he goes to his village to seek five friends. When he has found them he brings them back to his 'house of song.' They carry with them as many withered dancing wreathes as they can collect, together with the feathers of frigate-birds, and of this strange fuel they make a small, acridly smoking fire in the middle of the 'house.' The poet sits, in such a position that the smoke may be blown upon him by the breeze, and his five friends face him in a semi-circle on the other side of the fire.

Without further preamble, he begins to recite the 'rough draft' of his poem, which he has ruminated overnight. It is the business of his friends to interrupt, criticise, interject suggestions, applaud, or howl down, according to their taste. Very often they do howl him down, for they are themselves poets. On the other hand, if the poem, in their opinion, shows beauty they are indefatigable in abetting its perfection. They will remain without food or drink under the pitiless

A Song from the Gilbert Islands

sun until night falls, searching for the right word, the balance, the music that will convert it into a finished work of art.

When all their wit and wisdom has been poured out upon him, they depart. He remains alone again—probably for several days—to reflect upon their advice, accept, reject, accommodate, improve, as his genius dictates. The responsibility for the completed song will be entirely his.

Like the songs of the old English 'makers,' of the French troubadours, of the German minnesingers, Gilbertese poetry is nearly all vocal in character. Usually, too, its proper accompaniment is the dance, for it is intensely dramatic.

Before a poem can come before the public, therefore, it must be fitted to a chant, and interpreted in terms of movement by the sinuous and poised gestures of skilled dancers. The adaptation of words to movement is called, for obvious reasons, the 'Raising of the Hands.' Unless the poet be himself an expert in this art, he must hand over his work to a committee of 'producers,' past masters of dancing, who, for no reward save honour, will elaborate the exquisitely difficult and intricate movements of torso, head, eyes, arms, and fingers intended to interpret the artist's theme.

Before this august body the village dancers assemble, perhaps two hundred strong, and phrase by phrase they learn the new song. As each passage becomes known, the experts sketch out the appropriate attitudes, which are tried and retried until satisfaction is reached. There are interminable repetitions, recapitulations, revisions, until the flesh is weary and the chant sickeningly familiar. But from a ragged performance of ill-timed voices and uncertain attitudes, the song-dance becomes a magnificent harmony of bodies, eyes and arms swinging and undulating in perfect attunement through a thousand poses, to the organ tone of ten score voices chanting in perfect rhythm. Then dawns the poet's day of glory.

The dance chants cover the whole range of experience that may befall an island people. They are heroic, celebrating warriors and travellers; elegiac, mourning the dead; lyrical, singing of love; and humorous, burlesquing men or manners. Even poems which profess to be nothing but farcical are worthy of serious attention, for they

Arthur Grimble

often delight one with satirical passages of a shrewd childlike penetration, and sometimes achieve epigram in the authentic manner of Martial—as in this scrap of a modern song :

That man came shouting, "I am a chief."
Certainly he looks lazy enough for the title ;
He also has the appetite of a king's son,
And a very royal waddle.
But he shouts, "I am a chief" ;
Therefore I know he is not one.

This is the sort of sally which particularly delights the humour of a Gilbertese audience.

But you come upon sudden beauty too in these comic songs that soothes the senses as the trilling of a bird heard through the clatter of a farmyard. Here is a stave of pure music, which I found sandwiched between passages of not very decent buffoonery :

Whence camest thou, my sister ? Tell me for I would hear.
Thou camest on a laggard wind, a day of baffling calms.
Thou hast brought unease to the land. My dreams are heavy,
For thou has brought the sickness of love to me.
Would I had never seen thy face ! I love thee, I love thee !

The island singer knows full well that beauty is never out of place. And he realises also that there is no 'leadene metal' that his alchemy cannot 'into gold transmute,' no subject however humble that cannot be turned into song, and no song, if it expresses the heart, that cannot outlive the years of a man and the ravages of time. Perhaps the song for the marriage of 'Movement of Clouds' and of the fulfilment of Old Eri's prophecy when a new home was found for his descendants will be sung long after the facts are forgotten.

When, early in 1932, I was transferred to islands on the other side of the world and the time came for me to leave the Gilbert Islanders for good, I left their problems in other hands but I kept their songs : and amongst them was one that my friend Taata gave me :

Even in a little thing
(A leaf, a child's hand, a star's flicker)
I shall find a song worth singing
If my eyes are wide, and sleep not.

A Song from the Gilbert Islands

Even in a laughable thing
(Oh, hark ! The children are laughing !)
There is that which fills the heart to overflowing,
And makes dreams wistful.

Small is the life of a man
(Not too sad, not too happy) :
I shall find my songs in a man's small life. Behold
 them soaring !
Very low on earth are the frigate-birds hatched,
Yet they soar as high as the sun.



Reflections in a Double Mirror

BY MAY SARTON

There is anxiety hot in the throat,
The dark wood where even lovers get lost,
The axe held loosely, dangerous in the hand,
That might slip, those cloudy dreams of threat.
There is always ahead some next, more awful test,
Or again the bog, indifference, dragging quicksand ;
There is the never-ending battle with
The unforgiven, unforgiving self for truth :
It may all prove untenable for lack of hope,
Something we cannot deal with or escape—

These are the things we lie awake to ponder.

There is in each of us a healing mother ;
There is the hand cradling the axe, breaking
Dead wood down, held lightly with clean grace ;
There is the help we can give each other,
And, every morning, light at our first waking
As if each day a blessing did take place.
Despite all fumbles, bungling, we endure,
Manage to go on building the hard inner core,
A free self that might harbour faithful love.
There is more in us than we have learned to give.

These are the things we lie awake to ponder.

Annunciation

BY MAY SARTON



Here in two ways perspective leads us on
From matter and from moment : we explore
A flight of arches diminished one by one
Above converging lines upon the floor ;
They bring us, captivated, to an open door.

From everything that might trouble the mind,
This narrowing path is drawn to set us free,
Sends us to Heaven magically designed :
We cannot help but go there when we see
The hill, the cool blue air, the pointed tree.

The matter and the moment are forgotten
But they are always there, still taking place.
The angel tells of Love to be begotten,
And we who have been running free in space
Come back, refreshed, to meet it face to face.

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Trumpets Off

BY CELIA DALE

WHEN Saunders first came to the jungle he thought the noises would drive him mad. Now he no longer noticed them.

When Radzillu first came he had not noticed the noises ; but now each one beat separately upon him, as though he were living in some huge shop of clockwork toys. The insects, the animals, the vegetation, even the steamy air, all had their own noises. It drove him mad, he said ; sometimes it seemed he could hear his own body at work, listen to each separate organ ticking, pulsing, decaying.

And Saunders, listening to him, would smile and fill the glasses again, his pink face that never bronzed indulgent but slightly embarrassed because Radzillu's histrionism still, even after all these years of lonely affection, disconcerted him a little.

For they were fond of one another, these two. They had need to be, for between them and the rest of white mankind stretched many hundreds of miles of isolation : by canoe to San Tomasso, itself no more than a cluster of Indian huts ; from there three days (if the launch did not overturn in the shallows or run aground on the mudbanks) to Manaos, and thence in time to the sea.

Saunders had come to the jungle first, and built his bungalow on the rise that commanded the last navigable reach of the sullen river. It was to this point that every six weeks the ramshackle, half-caste-owned motor-launch chugged its way, bearing supplies, gossip and out-dated newspapers. Never letters. Saunders had been a soldier, and outside that tight khaki world nothing else had existed—except his wife. He had been a prisoner-of-war for two sterile years, escaped, been recaptured, escaped again ; he had come home to find his wife gone to another man. In agony behind a façade of pride,

Trumpets Off

he had done his best to get killed ; but the war ended, and he was still alive. He put the seas and the long continents between himself and his humiliation.

For a time he had been alone with the river and the choking forest around him. Then Radzillu arrived. Saunders was glad he was not an Englishman, glad that he was as unlike an Englishman as anyone could be. Radzillu was a scoundrel—a Fascist, a fanatic, even an assassin (how many times Saunders had heard the story), but because he was a foreigner these things were unimportant. Indeed, they made friendship more possible, for the two men were alike in nothing save that both were outcasts. Both felt for their own countries bitterness and resentment. Saunders had left England because he could not bear to stay in it ; Radzillu had left his country because it would no longer have him. Their exile made them brothers, their differences made each to the other something exotic, beloved and rare.

Radzillu built his bungalow further up the river, where the banks drew together and thrust out vines to span the treacherous water. It was not so healthy as the site of Saunders' bungalow, but Radzillu seemed unaffected. The house was less well built, dirtier than Saunders', but Radzillu was unaffected by that too. It housed, very often, Indian girls, silent and thick-haired. To Saunders they were never more than an unfamiliar breed of dog or horse might be. To Radzillu they were women.

"You English are superb," Radzillu often said, twisting his swarthy limbs in one of Saunders' wicker chairs on Saunders' verandah. "You think that if you ignore life it will go quietly away. You occupy yourself with games, you hit a little ball, chase a little animal, hold little pieces of card in your hands—never do you occupy yourselves with the game, the business of living. Almost I could believe you do not really live at all—you have eliminated the necessity. I envy you. For me life is a necessity, even in this hell. I must talk, I must hunt, I must have even these ugly women. For me life is the splendid overture to death."

And Saunders would laugh his short, embarrassed laugh into the tumbler of whiskey, indulgent, fond, because that was the sort of high-flown nonsense you expected from good old Radzillu.

They did not meet every day. Saunders was too English not to

value privacy even in this remote place ; and Radzillu was often very drunk or very occupied with a woman or very full of hate for mankind. Savage and surly, he lounged about his own unkempt bungalow at these times, and Saunders let him be. Himself a man of unvarying temper, he yet respected and understood Radzillu's moods. The chap was a foreigner. . . .

But one day they did invariably spend together : the day of the motor-launch. During the morning Radzillu would come down from his bungalow, sometimes by canoe, in which case he looked brilliant and a little exaggerated somehow, Saunders always thought, his yellowing white suit almost unwrinkled, his shabby bush hat angled on his over-long black hair ; or sometimes he came on foot, when his suit would be crumpled and stained by the hungry vegetation that clung as he pushed along the track, and his thin face bright with sweat and conquest.

"She loves me," he said, turning on the verandah steps to stare back into the forest. "She is like a lustful woman who clings and claws and strangles you with her embraces. Pah !" He spat at the green tangle beyond the clearing, and came up the steps to Saunders.

"One day," said Saunders, pouring out the whiskey, "one day it'll kill you. I've warned you often enough. A snake, a jaguar, maybe even an Indian with too much drink in him. . . ."

"Or something not so prosaic, not so explainable, dear Saunders—the vines that grow so fast will bind me in, like a fly in a spider's web, and I shall die, strangled by too much life !" Radzillu laughed, and gulped down his whiskey.

"I've warned you often enough," repeated Saunders. "It's damned selfish of you to risk it, you know. I'd be damned lonely without you."

Radzillu laughed again, almost tenderly. "My dear friend, you are wrong. You are like your own little island, sufficient to yourself. It is I who would die in solitude. But it pleases me to hear you say it. We are two brothers against the world, and together we defy the world."

A hoarse hoot sounded from the river. "She's early," said Saunders, looking at his watch. Together they went down to the river's edge.

Trumpets Off

Rusty, stained with green, her paint peeling, her sides dented here and there, the launch came into sight. Silently the Indian crew anchored. A canoe was loaded and came deftly to the land. Taking the packages, Saunders learned that the half-caste skipper was down with fever and would not be coming ashore. The launch was returning immediately to San Tomasso.

Opening the bundle of newspapers as they went, Saunders and Radzillu walked back to the shade of the verandah.

It was the English papers that gave the news first. Interrupting his methodical reading, Saunders read the item twice. An English tourist had been shot by a frontier guard of Radzillu's country. The man had died. Representations had been made to the government.

He laid aside the paper, unfinished though it was, and picked up the next issue. Nothing in that; nor the next day's. In the third, the story lay on the front page, not prominent but easy to see. The British Ambassador had called on the President; compensation had been refused; the Englishman, it was alleged, had been a spy.

"What nonsense!" Saunders muttered.

Radzillu peered round his own newspaper. "What is?" He read the story in Saunders' paper, and shrugged. "Why should it be nonsense? Even the English are spies sometimes. My paper has it stronger. It appears they found maps on him." He grinned. "Let us see what happens in the next instalment." He threw aside the newspaper and scuffed through the rest. Saunders waited, sipping whiskey, his blue eyes looking at the river.

"Ho, ho!" Radzillu crumpled the paper open. "Your government has sent us a stiff Note. They demand money, a guarantee, an apology, and the poor soldier who fired the wicked shot must be 'disciplined.'"

"Quite right too—firing wildly like that. . . ."

Radzillu lowered the newspaper. "Wildly? It was not wild firing. The spy was killed. A good shot, I think."

"The man was a tourist, not a spy. Anyway, shoot first and talk afterwards isn't the way to do things."

Radzillu's face grew sullen. "It is what I have done when I killed the traitor Tradusz. Patriots are men of action, not of empty words."

Celia Dale

Saunders' pink deepened. "I don't believe in acting first and thinking afterwards."

"Perhaps because the English cannot think?"

For an instant stubborn blue eyes and jeering brown stared at one another in hostile astonishment. Then Radzillu flung the paper to the floor. "Ach, why do we read these things!"

"One must keep in touch."

"But let us not quarrel. We don't owe the world that. Let's not speak any more of these stupidities. Give me a drink."

Saunders filled the glasses. But a shadow had fallen on the day. In the hot breeze the crumpled sheets of the newspapers beckoned and whispered on the wooden floor. The two men drank more than usual in less time than usual, and the silences were longer between them. When Radzillu left the day was hardly gone; and he took with him the foreign newspapers from the verandah floor.

* * * * *

It was like one of the vines in the jungle, starting from so insignificant a seed, growing so swiftly, spreading so far, destroying what it fastened upon.

Now for the first time constraint lay between them, in a relationship where constraint had no place. There had been before, for Saunders at least, a few voluntary reticences, things of which he did not care to speak. But they had no secrets from one another, for their exile made them brothers. Yet of this thing, brought to them by the weeks' old newspapers, they could not speak. Embarrassment, bred half from their regard for one another, half from something which had no name, outlawed from their conversation the subject which grew strongest in their minds. For, till the launch came up again with its packages, British troops manœuvred within air reach of a foreign frontier, complaints lay on the desk of the United Nations, allies and enemies angled for position. Till the newspapers arrived once more in six weeks' time Saunders and Radzillu would not know what had developed, whether they were at peace still or at war.

And because now they could not be quite natural together, Saunders and Radzillu became more typical of their own nations, less individual

Trumpets Off

men. Radzillu's talk was wilder, full of obscenity and drink, as was the bungalow which the vines and the jackdaw greed of the women were slowly pulling to pieces. Saunders spoke less and less, drinking his whiskey, watching the river eat its way past the banks. Doubt and suspicion bred in the suddenly empty place where friendship had been.

So, slowly, the days passed till the launch was due again. Coughing through the thick water, it anchored and its skipper came ashore. For a moment he feared the two Europeans must be dead at last, for never before could he remember their not being on the bank to meet him. Then he saw them waiting on the Englishman's verandah.

They drank together and heard gossip, the stores were unloaded, the heat grew less oppressive, the day became clear and sweet as it prepared to detach itself from night; and the newspapers lay on the table beside the glasses and the bottles, unopened. When the half-caste and his launch had vanished down the river again, the bundle was like a third presence in the swift twilight.

His teeth glinting from the stubble of his unshaven face, Radzillu watched as Saunders opened his knife and cut the cord that bound the newspapers together. They fell apart like speckled pods.

Radzillu caught at Saunders' wrist. "Not now," he said. "Let us—" Saunders was ashamed to see there were tears in his eyes—"let us keep friends, my dear English friend. Let me go back into the hell out there, back to my own sty with our friendship still secure and noble. . . ."

Saunders disengaged his hand. "You're drunk, Radzillu," he said. "You'd better let one of my boys take you up the river."

"Yes, I am drunk. I am drunk and afraid of nothing. I will fight my way alone through the jungle, and if I die no one will mourn me." He finished his drink and picked up his newspapers. "But I shall not die. I snap my fingers. I shall not die because I am a patriot."

Saunders watched the flicker of Radzillu's torch out of sight through the undergrowth. The light staggered as Radzillu's drunken energy bore it on. As he went, he sang something Saunders had never heard him sing before: his national anthem.

* * * * *

Celia Dale

Ten days passed, and the papers had been read many times, before Radzillu visited Saunders again. This time he came in a canoe, his yellowed suit neat, a rifle under his arm. With him came an Indian girl, smooth-skinned and squat. He had never brought his women down before; he had never been so jaunty before. At the steps of Saunders' verandah he paused and told the girl to wait. "Because," he said, "I know you British do not like wogs in your houses."

"Personally, I don't," said Saunders. At the sight of Radzillu his face had flushed, and now he looked steadily away from him and his woman, with her brown naked breasts. Radzillu sat down and poured himself a drink.

"I know it. Humble apologies. But she is useful to me when I hunt—like a dog, you know, and yet also useful in other ways." He winked and gulped down his drink. "Apologies also that I come to your house under arms. It is discourteous but unavoidable."

"Have you had any luck?"

"Rotten, my friend—nothing stirs in this hell which is always stirring. That is why I must not stay longer. With my gun, my retriever there, the hunting blood of my people in my veins, the day shall not be empty. For your hospitality, thanks. I will look in again on you sometime."

He swaggered away through the heat with the girl at his heels. That she should be his, at his heels, and Indian, he knew would set a pulse beating in the Englishman's brain. He could feel it already, beating on his back, answered in his own brain, in his whole body, in the stifling air breathed up by the oozy earth, by the stridence of sound which made up the silence of this desolate place. He felt it, he knew it, and he laughed at it, harshly, with bravado, as his people were laughing in the mouths of English guns.

For both men knew their countries must now be at war. For ten days they had known, from the last newspapers. Armies mobilised, allies ranged themselves, flags streamed behind the headlines and the statements of statesmen. And between the two men, isolated in inaction within their own tiny world, suspense hardened into hostility.

Left to themselves they could have mastered it. But every few days Radzillu would come down to Saunders' bungalow, swaggering, raffish, insolently polite. He seemed to take a delight in bruising

Trumpets Off

the wincing nerves of both of them. He forced contacts ; drunk or sober, his bravado insulted the men they had been. In Saunders, shut behind his impassive pink façade, repulsion mounted like a slow gauge. Staring away towards the river so as not to see the bright bitter eyes, the dirty linen and unkempt straggling hair, he could not shut out the intolerable voice, with its accent, its malicious courtesies, its gloating, inexorable recitation of experiences which could not possibly be true. Everything about the man was an offence. Everything that had once been welcome because it was foreign was now repugnant.

Again the days passed, days bright with repression and difficult pretence ; nights full of brooding, alone with the whiskey and the groping growth beyond the clearing, that strangled as it grew. The huge moon glittered over the jungle, that stirred and cried out ceaselessly, and in the shadows small things grew monstrous.

The day of the motor-launch came round again. Saunders could not rest. His blue eyes bloodshot, his face puffed, he paced and paced the creaking verandah. He had been drinking already, and to his tautened nerves it seemed later than it was. The launch was late—surely it was late. Radzillu was late too. Perhaps today he would not come. Perhaps today he would have the decency to stay away and lick his wounds in private, not force a man to watch him read of the war, of killing, and of his country's defeat. For of course by now they would have been defeated.

Saunders poured another whiskey. He would go back to his own people. They would need officers now, experienced men trained in war, men of discipline and fidelity, who knew how to deal with conquered countries. No time for personal bitterness now. The past had closed over itself as the jungle would close over this bungalow after he had gone. War calls everyone. . . .

Then the bushes opened, and there he was. Crumpled, dirty, he strutted drunkenly across the clearing. Saunders stood motionless.

Radzillu bowed very low, with a great flourish. "Good morning, good morning—I trust you are well, dear Saunders?" Clinging to the balustrade, he climbed the steps to the verandah. "For myself, I am drunk already, like all us foreigners. There is little else to do in this hell but drink. If my veins were not full of whiskey I should

have died long ago in the plagues and stinks of my poor little piece of land."

Saunders' pink face was expressionless. "You shouldn't have built there. I told you it was full of fever."

"But where, where, where, my dear good English friend, was I to build my poor little house?" He waved his forefinger at Saunders, squinting down it as though it were the wavering barrel of a gun. "There was nowhere else. You had got the best place for yourself, like all your countrymen."

Blood seeped through the little veins of Saunders' face. "I was here first."

"Of course, of course, as always. Wherever we poor foreigners go there is always an Englishman ahead of us. Oh, they are a great people—so huge, so great, like an elephant. He lifts his foot so—he brings it down so—crushing a thousand little insignificant peoples. He should be your national emblem, my Saunders—and the tiger should be mine, to leap and claw and pull down. . . ."

"And betray!" The words cracked like a flag in the wind.

Radzillu's eyes grew narrow, his lips grew narrow, and he smiled.

"What do you mean by that, dear Saunders?"

"What I say. You and your country—look what you did in the war, the last war—treacherous, corrupt, bestial. . . ." There was a pulse beating in Saunders' temple for Radzillu to see. It throbbed and throbbed, pumping blood into Saunders' mind, his eyes, his words. Up and up, the secret gauge of hate rose as it pumped, flooding his body with fury, flooding his mouth with words, flooding his eyes so that Radzillu's face swam and was clouded.

Radzillu smiled again, derisively, with contempt and hatred. Then in a voice so quiet that Saunders hardly heard it, he spoke. As he spoke, he spat.

The world swung away from Saunders; there was nothing any more but the haze of blood before his eyes, the thunder of it in his ears. He stepped forward, his hands lifting up to fasten about Radzillu's throat, to dig slowly, inquisitively down through the sweaty flesh to find and stop the breath that lurked there. As his hands moved upwards he could already see, calmly, Radzillu's face, distorted and mad with fear, above his hands; and Radzillu's body

Trumpets Off

below them, writhing, hanging helplessly from them like a snake. It would take a long time to search out and stop the breath in that greasy throat, but that did not matter, for time had ceased. The river, the forest, the world no longer existed ; there were only himself and the throat of his enemy in the whole universe. . . .

He felt a sharpness across his fingers, and saw with surprise blood pressing out from them. Radzillu had backed against the verandah, and held a knife in his hand.

From the river the launch hooted—once, twice, three times, over and over again.

The mists cleared. The pounding stopped. The world slowly reformed and arched itself over them once more. His hands, with the blood across them, began to tremble and fell to his sides. He felt cold and weak and terrified, and turned in bewilderment towards the river. The launch gave two more impatient hoots, and was silent, for the skipper had come in sight round the bend in the track, the Indians jogging silently behind him with the stores. The skipper had a newspaper in his hand, which he waved above his head when he saw Saunders.

"Holla there, señor ! So you're not dead after all !" he called, the sweat staining the singlet that covered his fat torso. "I hoot and hoot and no one comes, only the Indians, who will not speak. I fear to find you lying dead in your bunk, and I say Mother of God, let it not be so, for I bring good news, my friend. See—here." He panted up the verandah steps and threw down with a flourish on the table the newspaper he had waved.

"You will take me by the hand, you will embrace me !" he cried. "To you I am as the angel Gabriel. See, read. . . ."

Saunders bent over the table and spread out the newspaper. In a silence broken only by the click of Radzillu's knife as he closed its blade, he read the headlines : **THREAT OF WAR VANISHES. AGREEMENT REACHED. PEACE PACT SIGNED TODAY.**

"Am I not welcome ?" cried the skipper, "am I not as the blessed dove with the olive branch in its beak ? In San Tomasso the news comes by radio, very bad, very faint, but I think my friends up the river will be glad ; I break open the newspapers to make sure for myself what I think I have heard, and lo, it is true, all is now well,

Celia Dale

all is now calm again. Come, my friends, señor Saunders, señor Radzillu, pour out whiskey and let us all drink to peace, to friendship unbroken, to comradeship ! Let us all embrace each other ! ”

Radzillu came slowly from the verandah rail. His face, greenish-white, glistened with sweat ; he looked like a man with fever. He was quite sober now.

Saunders, too, was sober. They looked at each other across the table with the newspapers spread on it, and slowly, obedient to the skipper's urging, their right hand stretched out and met over the headlines.

But their eyes were hard as shields.

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JOHN MURRAY

Fragments of a Mexican Journal

BY LESLEY BLANCH

THE theatrical aspect of Mexican daily life is overpowering : the fierce light beats down, an assault, and the shadows cast by the paeons' huge-brimmed sombreros give their faces a skull-like relief, black eye-sockets and sunken, fleshless jaws, recalling the apocalyptic wood-cuts of Posada, the Daumier of Mexico. Every scene has a convulsive air. At every turn, we are reminded of a Clouzot film. In the shadow of the sumptuously gilded church, a landslide of garbage glows brilliant with rotting fruit and offal. Lean dogs prowl, men fight with knives, and a graceful creature, delicately boned as an Aztec princess, draws her *reboso* about her head—a street Madonna, nursing her child, unconcerned.

Juchitán.

Across the cactus-studded hills, a cloud of dust resolves into a group of horsemen : bold, centaur figures, galloping into town, bent on mischief, by their looks. They rein up abruptly, beside an ambulant photographer's booth, and kneeling before a primitive painted backcloth depicting the Miraculous Virgin of Guadalupe, they strike attitudes of theatrical piety, hands clasped, liquid black eyes rolled heavenwards, as if perceiving some ecstatic vision.

Yucatan.

Once Merida was the centre of the world's sisal or hemp trade. Now the forgotten little capital lives becalmed in its fabulous archeological past. The lost splendours of the Mayan cities overpower its modest present. A green web of jungle spreads beyond the ruins of temples, plumed-serpent pyramids and past glories to encroach on the living city. There are few visitors who brave its inaccessibility.

Fragments of a Mexican Journal

Ships must lie several miles out to sea, beyond the shallows. Only one track-like road runs through the brush : a plane flies in two or three times a week, stopping there between Mexico and Cuba. At twilight, the sky turns a pale, bright mauve, and merges in a lilac haze with the deeper mauve of the jacaranda trees. In the cathedral, there is more mauve : the choristers wear parma-violet robes beneath their lace-trimmed tops. Later, we saw them in the main square. They were eating violet ices (*Elegantes y Delicados*), and having their pointed patent leather boots cleaned by even smaller, more simian-looking boys, while a sumptuous middle-aged lady with a lace parasol stood treat, from an open carriage drawn up beside the kerb. I wonder ; did Ronald Firbank know Merida ? He is recalled at every turn.

Palenque and Uxmal.

Eighty per cent of the local population is Mayan : among themselves Mayan is the current language. Their parrots, too, sound these incomprehensible syllables. Mayan standards of beauty once included bow-legs, receding foreheads achieved by bandages, and a squint, this being arrived at by strings fixed before the babies' line of vision. The present-day citizens, while comely, do not come up to the dazzling standards of the other Mexican provinces : from time to time the diabolic or grotesque masks of Mayan gods are still to be traced in the living Meridans.

Campeché.

Saturday night : the Salon de Bellezza (plugging a line of magenta nail varnish) works over-time preparing the local beauties for the ball tomorrow night. Cantinflas, the Charlie Chaplin of Mexico, is billed at the movie-house. There is *molé* on the menu at Pancho Pistoles restaurant. We will drive there in one of those strange little open carriages peculiar to Yucatan, with cracked, peeling leather curtain-flaps enclosing the passengers with a sort of harem secretiveness. They have an air of sinistry and intrigue, and seem at once ambulant confessional box and *maison de rendez-vous*. What dark drama lurks within ? We imagine some Meridan Emma Bovary rattling to her doom in such an equipage.

Progreso.

A broken-down line of buses runs between Merida, the giddy little capital, and Progreso, in the mangrove-swamp country along the mustard-yellow, brackish Gulf of Mexico. These buses have religious names. Ours was labelled *Nostre Dama del Succoro*. There were no springs, or glass in the windows either. Furnace heat, weighted by grit, blasted us as we bounced along through the cactus and sisal plantations. The journey was enlivened by several stops when everyone drank milk from fresh coconuts. The driver hacked them open for us with his machete. A blind guitarist paid his passage in kind, and everybody requested their favourite tunes, which he obligingly rendered. The driver was after the little señorita in pink on the back seat, and kept asking for some song about a dove. What would the French señora like they asked me, bowing gallantly? My mind went blank. I could only think of Wagner.

Mexico City.

Prison, like death, is not generally feared, however much, to the stranger's eye, conditions appear those of an engraving by Gustave Doré. Until lately, prisoners carried, and perhaps still carry arms, a gun or a knife, as protection against other prisoners. Children are with their mothers, and a new women's prison is now being completed, where conditions will be very progressive with crèches and gardens. In many prisons, and particularly the penal settlements near Vera Cruz, whole families move in with the criminal, sharing his cell and sentence.

At the Central Prison an enlightened rule admits the flesh, in the person of prisoners' wives and sweethearts on weekly visits, many hours at a time, behind closed cell doors. The huge noisy crowd of women surges forward through the gates, shrieking like parakeets, gaudy skirts swirling, teeth flashing. Their men are waiting for them, shouting and stamping. One by one the cell doors clang shut on their joys. It is quiet now. The guards lean against the courtyard walls lit by the sinking sun, picking their teeth, looking bored. In the simplicity of human relationships Mexican life recalls that of a more lusty Europe, when camp-followers and vivandières marched with the armies.

Fragments of a Mexican Journal

Leaving Mexico City before dawn, to fly down to the Chiapas Indian country, we saw many paeons still sprawled in the booths and tequila bars behind the Thieves Market. Livid acetylene flares sharpened the scene dramatically. Noisy *mariache* bands were still playing: the more prosperous paeons were munching some unplaceable meal—supper, breakfast? It was a dark mess, chocolate and pimento and entrails, oozing from between the eternal tortillas.

Flying southwards, we watched the sky lighten; it turned an electric green; suddenly the sun rose over great Ixtaccihuatl. Our flight followed its flank, over the crumpled brown canyons, on, southwards, where nothing lived, and where every conical hill was an extinct volcano. Sometimes we traced a thread of track across the desolation, but there were no roads. "Mont Alban!" shouted the pilot, and dipped the little plane sharply, swooping low over the vast Zapotec courts and pyramids lying below us, geometric and grim. Even in our plane (safe in our plane, we felt, by comparison with the legends of human sacrifice and Aztec cruelties) we seemed to hear the ascending shrieks of the victims as their beating hearts were torn from them by the priests' black obsidian knives.

Chiapas.

The traditional Mexican passion for, and belief in, strange drugs, secret spells and herbal concoctions, malefic or curative, continues unabated: but now, besides the necromancers' booths at country markets, where love-philtres and darkly powerful powders guaranteed to bring about both births and deaths are sold, there is a purely contemporary aspect too. INJECCIONES says a roughly printed card in many windows along the cobbled main street. This means that penicillin, hormones and multiple-vitamins, as well as less specific kinds of local drugs, are freely obtainable, and as freely injected, by the local nurse, the inn-keeper, or the woman across the way. . . .

Among the Chamulas medicine is a subject of absorbing interest. In the remote villages set high in the bare, Thibetan-like uplands, the flat-featured, Asiatic-faced inhabitants are properly proud of their medical centre. A small, newly built, well-equipped clinic is run by a doctor and nurse, whose base it is, between enormous mountain rounds. One or two especially gifted Chamula men, village leaders,

Lesley Blanch

were trained as assistants, to act in the doctor's absence. Alas ! Having mastered the aseptic technique, their zeal became almost insensate : the limited supplies of rubber gloves, sterilised gauzes, hypodermic needles, surgeons' masks and all the panoply of the operating theatre had been expended on every head-cold, liver complaint or croupy brat that came for advice. Now, save for real emergencies, a return to more casual curative methods is encouraged.

St. Cristobal las Casas.

A bleak, austere land ; nothing tropic here. We watch the eagles soaring high above the black forests, where a band of Zinacothék Indians hunt them with crazy flint-lock guns dating from Iturbides' reign. These Zinacothéks are the fops of Central America, their build, manner and costume mark them as a race apart. They appear to have stepped from some eighteenth-century Embarkation for Cythère, a canvas by Hubert Robert, all roses and cupidons, rather than the mountains and gorges that are their home. Their clothes are wildly improbable. The men wear a short—very short—tunic of pink and white striped linen, long, bare legs and elegantly sandalled feet ; the whole topped by little straw hats tipped coquettishly over one ear, and bunched with pale coloured satin ribbons. Most of them carry guitars, also ribbon trimmed, made from armadillo shells. Sometimes we came on groups of them sitting by the road, thrumming their guitars and singing, roadside troubadours. Their women are seldom seen, and remain as utilitarian and drab as any hen-bird. These peacock fops look an idle, seducing lot. It was as if a troupe of strolling players, costumed for one play, had strayed by chance into the scenery of another ; some *fête galante* by Marivaux in Pastor Manders' thunderous setting.

Oaxaca.

At dusk, the ilex trees glistened with the first lamp-light. Whole families of grey squirrels which had been chittering and frisking in the foliage now darted down to drink the dew from the ornamental flower-beds below. When they sipped, they shut their eyes, like wine connoisseurs. The markets were shutting, and the cafés were opening. All along the street beside the fruit market, crouched a

Fragments of a Mexican Journal

line of women and young girls, selling off the fruits and food which would not be saleable next day. Each huge basket contained, beside its now dubious wares, a ha'penny dip, lighting the beautiful, stony faces from below, footlight-wise. They preened and ogled the passers-by, shouting bawdily, for they, too, were for sale, along with the melons, aguacates, chayotes, papayas and cherimoyas. Exotic fare.

San Miguel Allende.

Behind the Chirruguesque façade of the convent, a line of black washing, nuns robes, flaps crow-like and incongruous in the sunlight.

Cholula.

The sound of flute and marimba, and a soft, joyous song comes nearer. We stand under the orange trees and watch the procession. It is a baby's funeral. One man carries the small, shoe-box-sized white cardboard coffin on his shoulder. The mourners follow, grave-faced, but not grieving. Life is hard; the baby has escaped; he is with God! They dance, a jigging step, and sing a sort of abstract, stylised expression of joy, in keeping with the Mexicans' voluptuous pleasure in death. Hereabouts it is quite customary for a rich family to purchase the corpse from a poor household, thus acquiring a reason for holding an elaborate festival of death—a wake. This way, all are satisfied: the poor, that their dead has a splendid burial: the rich, that they have the occasion to celebrate death worthily.

Lake Pascuaro.

I crept out of the house very early one morning. I like to watch a village wake. The women were fanning their charcoal braziers, beside the open door. Overhead, brilliant speckled and spangled birds flittered in the tall eucalyptus trees. The church bell clanged to the counterpoint of tortillas smacking on the stones, plip-plop, a flabby sound. Along the lake, a group of fishermen were mending their strange looped figure-of-eight nets: they looked like gigantic butterflies settled on the still surface of the water. It was a pastoral scene: a lyric landscape. But brigand-infested too. The men had scowling, blackly-beautiful faces. Beside them lay their striped

Lesley Blanch

serapes and machetes : these last, murderously curved knives, are as much a symbol of Mexican daily life as the furled umbrella to London. One man, eyeing me stonily, picked up his machete, and licking his thumb, ran it along the blade. As I faltered, he lent forward with a sudden swoop—and began slicing at his toe-nails. He looked up under his huge straw hat : he was laughing, showing a double row of broad, perfect, primeval-looking teeth. But his eyes retained their basilisk stare. Whey-faced ladies should not prowling about alone—even in the morning, he seemed to say.

Tehuantepec.

A brazen heat pours down like liquid fire. All along the wildly cobbled streets thatched shacks are topped by a line of huge brooding black birds—zopilotes, a kind of vulture. Tiny green parakeets, clowns of the bird world, perch on the heads of drowsy dogs, or ride, staggering and lurching, on the top of the towering laundry baskets which the majestic Tehuantepec matrons carry on their heads. Even at noon there is no siesta hush. The voices of women, children and macaws merge into one chattering shriek. The streets peter out into twining coiling jungles. Every back-yard reveals the same scene ; a hammock lulling a sprawling man, and a woman toiling over the charcoal stove, or wash-tub. The scene has, it must be admitted, a certain international flavour : in essence, it is found all the world over, from a flat in Kensington to a yurt in Mongolia.

St. José de Purúa.

A luxury hotel is pitched down like an expensive toy, in wildest, richest, loveliest country. The yellow, radio-active pool drips with bougainvillea and roses. Waiters scuttle over from the main building with trays of sustenance. The parakeets shriek and flitter in the eucalyptus groves, and the tourists pile their belongings under the sun umbrellas, towels, scrabble sets, and small, unobtrusive crocodile jewel-cases. That way they can keep an eye on them. Bandit country ! The bare hills quiver in the noonday blaze : rocky, remote, streaked with water-falls, they are the perfect setting for a brigand's lair. The happy tourists plunge in, surfacing often, like hippos, keeping a wary eye trained on the jewel-cases, boiling away their

Fragments of a Mexican Journal

ailments, their wrinkles, their overweight, their past. . . . And then, a Mexican Indian girl sways down the road, on bare, patrician feet, staring ahead, aloof and indestructibly beautiful in her bone structure, her womanly grace. The tourists watch her out of sight. A shadow seems to have fallen over their play. "Homer! I guess we'll go in to lunch now," says a rather fretful voice. . . . One by one, the towels, the scrabble boards, and the crocodile jewel-cases are collected, reassuring symbols of civilisation. At luncheon, most of the visitors bring portable radios to their tables, to croon them through the courses. . . . No more need to talk, to think . . . no more loneliness or strangeness. The hearty tones of a 'commercial' rise above the clatter of crockery. No more sense of being far away. They are home.

Mexico City.

So many layers of civilisation and savagery here: Aztec, Toltec, Zapotec, Mayan, Spanish, French, American. . . . Maximilian as well as Montezuma. The terrible sacrificial pyramids of Teotihuacan can be seen from the terrace heights of Maximilian's palace at Chapultepec, where Montezuma's giant ahuehuete trees still shade the park. And down in the city, neon lights play across the blistering baroque of a church where Cortez' priests said Mass. *Vistas y Aspectos* everywhere.

Pedigral.

Elegant, wealthy Mexicans create new standards of luxury living among the black lava fields of Pedigral, where glass and steel architecture seems an organic part of the landscape. There are no trees, no flowers here: only the geometric forms of the villas break the harshness. They are painted astonishingly, lemon or turquoise roofs, one wall salmon, another lilac. Flocks of white doves circle round them, reflecting the colours in an iridescent flash of wings, theatrically brilliant against the lava. When Madame Calderon de la Barca went to Mexico in 1840 as the young Scottish bride of the first Spanish Envoy, she described 'the Pedigral' as being an immense formation of ferruginous lava and porphyritic rock, looking as if cursed for some crime committed there.

Chapultepec.

The feathery pepper trees shade a terrace which overlooks the city far below. Here Carlotta and Maximilian paced, united by their failures as much as their ambitions. He, pouting over some point of Hapsburg protocol to be adapted to the Mexican court: she, planning where to plant another of those florid little wrought-iron band-stands she strewed about the furthest townlets of her wild domain. They still stand, frivolous monuments to a tragic Empress; but when the people gather, solemn, in pleasure as in pain, to hear a marimba band whacking local airs or Gershwin, a breath of patchouli and an echo of Offenbach seems to fall on the scene, recalling that second Empire Paris which sponsored Maximilian's brief reign.

Proud, ineffectual Carlotta is most clearly seen at Chapultepec, for her private suite is still much as she left it: a series of bourgeois, overstuffed salons, dark, in spite of the brilliant Mexican sunlight outside. Carved ebony furniture, a fusty canopied bed; two rose-wood grand pianos, where she and her husband sat back to back, galloping through duets by Meyerbeer, and an inlaid writing-desk where she scribbled away the fateful days. . . . Long-nosed, proud Carlotta, bent over the emblazoned sheets of paper, scribbling her interminable letters to the Empress Eugénie. It was Empress to Empress. 'Madame and good sister,' she wrote, 'we trust in God and are very content. *Mes Lundis* are really most *réussi* . . . small gatherings of guests, fifty or so. . . .' And all the while, the implacable Indian faces were closing in. The fifty guests dwindled to the fourteen ladies in waiting . . . soon the Court ceased to exist. When the French troops were withdrawn and the last battle lost, only two men stood beside the Emperor, facing the firing squad on the Hill of the Bells, at Querétaro. Even the embalmers failed him. What remained of the Emperor had to be swathed in mummy-like bandages, from head to foot, before being returned in state to Vienna.

But as Carlotta had gone mad, some months earlier, when visiting the Vatican to plead her husband's cause, she was spared all knowledge of the final failure.

Tapachula.

Last night I called for oil and vinegar to mix a salad dressing. The

Fragments of a Mexican Journal

proprietor speaks some English : I wish he didn't, for he plunged into a description of the *vinagrillo*, a large yellow cricket-like local creature which smells strongly of vinegar, and as it crawls across its prey (it has a special partiality for sleepers) it leaves a fine trail of some deadly slime. Such information breeds insomnia.

At breakfast he enlarged on another creature which hurls itself on its victim, and if prevented from delivering its fatal bite, shrivels up and dies of spite. But after the *vinagrillo* this sounds quite reassuring—almost human, in fact.

Tzinzuntzan.

No one told me about the birds. Every province has its own special birds, like its fruit or flowers, a thousand different fluttering, shimmering creatures, fluting, cawing, shrieking. At *Purapechas*, by the end of the lake, there is a whole town, or concentration of humming-birds, where these beetle-sized little beauties zoom and dart about the honied trails of vine, 'cup-of-gold,' or a plant called *izgu-jochitl*—'the flower of the raven.' Clumsy pelicans waddle through the mangrove swamps of Yucatan, sparring with the cormorants in search of fish. Gaudy macaws and parakeets flash through the tropic groves round *Orizaba*. Under the towering ash trees at *Tzinzuntzan* I heard the nightingale at noon ; but it turned out to be a yellow feathered bird, and I recalled that the Emperor Maximilian imported two thousand nightingales from Germany : were they, perhaps, then crossed with canaries ? Everywhere, in the mountains, in the valleys, I see those long-tailed black magpie-like birds, so impudently friendly, which seem to address one personally, as they flutter close, to perch on the spear-tip of a cactus or on a window-sill. The Mexicans call them 'ouraki' : in Mayan, they are 'toh.' Their song has the heart-piercing sweetness of a blackbird's trill, with something melancholy added, something which epitomises the Mexican landscape at dusk.

Guanajuato.

In the market place some miners, bold swarthy men made darker by coal dust, have emerged from the infernal regions to barter for *chirimoyas* and *grenadillas*, the fruit of the passion flower. There

Lesley Blanch

is much talk of Kinsey. Kinsey this, Kinsey that . . . a gabble of liquid-sounding phrases elude us. The Kinsey Report, here in Mexico too? Surely so virile a people are more interested in *deeds* than words? Suddenly the riddle is clear. *Qinsé*—how much? One must never jump to conclusions, and the preoccupations of one continent are seldom those of another.

Each to his House

BY HILARY GRAY

IT was so long since they had set out in this simple way, no cars, but only the derelict old bicycles. It reminded Toby of all those glorious holidays at Vaning and that was exactly what he wished to be reminded of. The others had laughed at his plan when he had first suggested a picnic in the long woods.

"Months since I went there," said Geoffrey, but then the past meant little to him and the present and future everything. Strange, thought Toby, since they had shared all this and now it was spring again and they had come to Vaning for a long week-end.

"We will have a picnic lunch by the three houses in the wood," and the others had agreed because the sun shone and it was a perfect spring day. Repairs on the car would be finished in time for them to drive to the dance that evening.

Veronica was pretty and did not care for the country and was quite unaccustomed to the simplicity of the old house. Still, it would make quite a good story when she got back to London. She had never imagined the gay Geoffrey in quite such a rural setting. It was such miles from anywhere and that drive quite five miles long. Still, there was the dance tonight and she and Geoffrey could always wander off by themselves and lose the other two. Toby might be better-looking than his brother but he was much too quiet for her. As for Tessa she was so shy it was almost painful. She was attractive in her slight, fragile way but almost colourless and it was absurd to think that she was twenty. Veronica, secure in her own social success and with the assurance of her type, simply ignored Tessa. Of course Toby had none of Geoffrey's easy charm of manner and he liked Tessa because she was quiet and gentle. There must be something behind the shyness and possibly she would open out like the spring flowers. So far even Geoffrey with his way of establishing a kind of

Hilary Gray

brittle companionship had only made her withdraw more inside herself, as though she were frightened away.

They set out in the warm, bright sunshine with the picnic hampers stuffed full of food put together by their mother and the cook. At the edge of the long wood they left their bicycles propped against the trees. There were carpets of primroses in the small clearings and the fresh green of these woods held all the enchantment for Toby they had always done. He strode ahead of the others and Tessa walked fast to keep pace with him. The laughter of the three of them broke the stillness and filled the woods with an alien vitality. Of course this was absurd, thought Toby, why should they not laugh and joke and bring the rhythm of all those gay tunes into his treasured place. Perhaps he should have come here alone, except for the three keys of their three huts.

These small houses had been built for them by their grandfather so that they could do exactly what they liked and camp out as much as they wished. Now, after months of neglect, Toby wanted to see them again, only nobody but himself should go into Neill's hut. Ever since his eldest brother's death some months before he had hidden the key away, even his mother had never asked for it. He had wanted to come with the others on this spring day to avoid the despair of coming alone. He thought that perhaps Tessa would understand, but he really knew very little about her. He wondered again how much there was to know.

They came to the old tree where they had all carved their initials, Neill's penknife had broken as he twisted it round in the 'F.'

"Whose initials are these?" asked Veronica, running an elegant painted nail over the 'N. S. F'.

"Neill's," said Geoffrey, "and here are mine and Toby's. Why on earth do boys always want to carve initials on things?"

"Neill? Oh, yes, your brother who was killed flying," said Veronica and turned away from the tree. There was life all round them and who wanted to think of gloomy death and it was all very sad, but she had never known Neill.

But Neill could not be dismissed and to Toby he was everywhere, darting in and out of the clearing where they spread their lunch, his swift movements and light step and that laugh. Never before had

Each to his House

Toby realised how alike Geoffrey's laugh was to Neill's. Yet an echo, as his voice was and those same mannerisms.

They had a bottle of white wine and a chicken and salad and even Tessa seemed at ease and relaxed. It was at such times that she made rather obvious remarks and of course Veronica and Geoffrey made fun of these.

"Well, it is lovely," she said once again because they had tried to tease her and she looked quite animated. Her pale, delicate colouring made Veronica's obvious prettiness seem like a peony to a primrose.

Afterwards they walked to the small clearing where the three huts stood and Toby handed Geoffrey his key and they all crowded into his house. There were pictures of soldiers in different uniforms still pinned to the walls and a large map with one corner torn away. There were also some pictures of film-stars and Veronica laughed at these and exclaimed that they were typical of Geoffrey, who never could exist without girls. There was an old rusty stove in the corner, where they had brewed cocoa and some very curious mixed drinks.

Then they all went into Toby's house and here one wall was now so damp that the pictures of animals and birds hung down forlornly from the rusted drawing-pins. Otherwise it was all very neat and self-contained like Toby. There were no soldiers and no girls, only a little chest of drawers that had contained birds' eggs.

Veronica took Geoffrey's arm. "Now, darling, I want to see inside that other hut," she said.

There was a brief silence.

"Sorry, no," said Toby firmly. "There's nothing to see."

"Old Toby has a thing about Neill's hut, silly but there it is. Anyhow, it's just as derelict inside."

"I want to see it," insisted Veronica. "Why this secrecy over Neill's hut anyway?"

He should never have brought them there, thought Toby, and having got them to this place he could never let them in.

Geoffrey wanted to see the keeper and he and Veronica, who was still rather sulky, set off down the path and soon their voices faded and there was only the silence of the woods. Toby turned the key over in his hand.

Hilary Gray

"You go in," said Tessa. "I'll go and see if any of your animal pictures can be dried in the sun."

Toby was grateful and fitted the key into the lock of the third hut. It was dark inside and he drew back the old curtain, rather dingy now but the sailing boats still showed in the pattern of the material. They had chosen it together because of the boats.

He sat down at the small table on the hard cane chair and saw that the tin box still stood in its corner. There were the paintings on the wall that Neill had done, but the heart and spring of Neill lay in that box. Next time, Toby thought, he would come alone and go through all those papers and diaries and the verses that only he had ever seen. There were all the writings of their childhood.

He leaned his head on the table, the feeling of nostalgia was overwhelming. He had been numbed by Neill's loss all these months, but now in the simple hut the realisation was upon him. The sunshine outside, the sweet scent of spring in the air seemed suspended in time for him. There was no sentiment about it, only he was no longer whole without that familiar companionship and suddenly it was here around him.

A gentle tap at the door and Tessa pushed it open rather cautiously. "The others are coming back with the keeper," she said, looking round. "There is really nothing here at all is there? I thought perhaps there might be something to see."

And Toby, staring at her childish face, felt a further desolation, for she had not begun to understand after all. What could there be here to see?

He stepped outside into the sunshine.

Hamilton on Volcanoes

BY OLIVER WARNER

I HAVE not one grain of jealousy in my composition,' wrote Sir William Hamilton to his friend Sir Joseph Banks, in a letter as yet unpublished. Hamilton has gone down to history as the prototype of the befooled husband, so that the freedom from torment which he must have enjoyed while his second wife, the lovely Emma, made Europe gossip at her affair with Nelson, can surely be envied.

In point of fact Hamilton was a man sufficiently remarkable in his own right to claim attention. If he had stayed a widower, if he had never welcomed Nelson at Naples after the victory of the Nile, and in doing so caused Emma to lose her head and the conqueror his heart he would still have repaid study as an example of the eighteenth century in flower. Soldier, courtier, diplomat, scientist, collector, scholar, patron of artists, musician, sportsman—Hamilton was all these things, concurrently or by turn. And he was endowed with one other quality, perhaps worth all the rest : to use a phrase of Pepys, 'he had the luck to be loved.' The luck held to the end.

Although he was related to many of the leading families of the United Kingdom, yet as he was only the fourth son of the seventh son of a Duke of Hamilton, the young man's expectations at his birth in 1730 were not considerable. 'I was condemned to make my way in the world with an illustrious name and a thousand pounds'—he used to say. Actually, few men were given, or seized, so many promising opportunities. Educated at Westminster, commissioned at seventeen into the Guards, Hamilton soon attached himself to the circle of the young Prince who in 1760 was to succeed to the throne as George III. Favour followed.

The most decisive turn came when Hamilton was twenty-seven. He left the army and, on his own confession with some slight reluctance,

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married the heiress of Hugh Barlow of Lawrenny Hall, Pembrokeshire, possessed of an estate of about £5,000 a year. Through his wife, Hamilton became independent for life. Three years later, after the young king's accession, he became Member of Parliament for Midhurst. In 1764 he took the other great step in his career. He accepted the post of Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the King of the Two Sicilies. Henceforward his home would be at Naples or Caserta, and for no less than thirty-six years he was a favourite at the southern Court. He soon became indispensable to the happiness of that eccentric Nimrod, Ferdinand IV, to whom he was accredited. He was equally acceptable to his strong-minded wife, Maria Carolina, of whom Bonaparte was later to say that she was the only man in Naples.

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For some years Hamilton's life was serene, though not idle. If his diplomatic duties were light, the King made incessant calls on his friend in the hunting field, for the chase was his obsession. There was always a stream of English people of fashion making the Grand Tour: above all, there was Vesuvius.

Hamilton was a keen geologist. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1766, and whenever Vesuvius was active, as was often the case throughout his years at Naples, he wrote a circumstantial letter to the President, giving every memorable detail of the manifestations. He had a villa near the slopes, and soon won the reputation for incurring risks which few Neapolitans would run. In the violent activities of 1766 he was sometimes out in the open night and day. On one occasion, after a particularly violent rumble, 'the mountain split,' to quote his own words, and a torrent of liquid fire began to roll towards the spot where he and a single peasant were exploring. The Neapolitan bolted, 'and I must confess,' said Hamilton, 'I was not at my ease. I followed close, and we ran three miles without stopping.' The earth shook beneath their feet, and a hail of pumice stones showered all around them.

Hamilton visited and described other volcanoes. The Royal Society indeed awarded him the Copley Medal in 1770 for a paper on Etna, but Vesuvius retained its attraction. He engaged an admirable

artist, Pietro Fabris, to illustrate two folio volumes in which his various studies were collected and annotated, the text being in French and English, so that it could be enjoyed by as many scientists as possible.

Even better known to the learned world were Hamilton's classical collections. He had the good fortune to serve at Naples when archaeologists were busy at Pompeii and Herculanaeum. Himself a tolerable classical scholar, he had the chance of acquiring an unsurpassed collection of Greek, Roman and Etruscan antiquities, including those of the house of Porcinari, which were bought for the British Museum in 1772. Even such a renowned treasure as the Portland Vase, so beautifully copied by Josiah Wedgwood, reached this country by his means. Nothing of first-rate quality came amiss to Hamilton, and when he had finished with one collection, another was apt to begin. He even obeyed Voltaire's injunction by cultivating his garden, creating a notable example of the English variety at Caserta. This was originally laid out for the Queen's pleasure, but was taken over by the King, whose first command was for a labyrinth which would tease his courtiers.

'I promise myself great pleasure in this new occupation,' Hamilton wrote to Banks, who had found him an expert manager. 'As one passion begins to fail it is necessary to form another; for the whole art of going through life tolerably in my opinion is to keep oneself eager about anything. The moment one is indifferent, *on s'ennuye*, and that is a misery to which I perceive that even kings are often subject.'

* * * * *

Hamilton's marriage to the Welsh heiress was in the outcome happy. His wife was delicate, but the air of Naples seemed to suit her. She was a pleasing hostess to her husband's friends, even to such wayward people as young Beckford of Fonthill, who wrote to tell her that 'after my mother, you are the person I love best in the universe. I could remain with you all my life, listening to your music and your conversation.' Lady Hamilton—she became so in 1772, when her husband was given the red ribbon of the Bath—was so skilled at the harpsichord that she won universal praise for her playing. Hamilton's own instrument was the viola. Their only child (who may perhaps

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National Portrait Gallery

SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON

From a portrait (1775) by David Allan with Vesuvius in the background.



British Museum

VESUVIUS IN SPLENDOUR

From a water-colour by Pietro Fabris of Naples for Sir William Hamilton, in 1779.

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Oliver Warner

have been adopted), died when still small, after which time Catherine Hamilton's care was given solely to her husband. She was deeply religious, 'an angel of purity' said Beckford, and when she died, in the summer of 1782, she left a letter which would have touched the heart of any man—and Hamilton had not always been a model of constancy.

'A few days, nay, a few hours, my dear Hamilton, may render me incapable of writing to you, I therefore will not delay it. But how shall I express my love and tenderness to you, dearest of earthly blessings! My only attachment to this world has been my love to you, and you are my only regret in leaving it. My heart has followed your footsteps wherever you went, and you have been the source of all my joys. I would have preferred beggary with you to kingdoms without you. But all this must have an end—forget and forgive my faults, and remember me with kindness. I entreat you not to suffer me to be shut up after I am dead till it is absolutely necessary. Remember the promise you have made me that your bones should lie by mine when God shall please to call you, and give directions in your will about it. May every earthly and heavenly blessing attend you, my dear Hamilton, and may you be loved as I have loved you. I am, yr faithfull wife . . .'

They had been married nearly five and twenty years.

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To distract his mind from his loss, Hamilton chartered a vessel from which he was able to visit scenes of a great earthquake in Calabria, an account of which he published. On the second of two brief journeys home, he procured a superior sort of rifle, through Banks' good offices, and engaged once more in the pursuit of game, until a time arrived when he could report archly to his friend that 'a beautiful plant called Emma has been transplanted here from England, and at least has not lost any of its beauty.' Hamilton may have thought he had added a new item to his collections, but it was he who was acquired. The truth was not apparent for some time, but

Hamilton on Volcanoes

it was a fact that Hamilton's attention was now centred upon a volcano whose eruptions would enthral posterity long after he himself was written off, unjustly, as senile and of no account.

The story of the transfer of Emma Hart from the protection of Hamilton's nephew, Charles Greville, to the society of Naples was well enough known to the tattlers of the day and has often been described since. Emma re-orientated her affections slowly, and with reluctance. Even had he wished to do so, Hamilton, by reason of his official position, could not have married her without approval from his sovereign. For some years he and Emma lived as decorous lovers, while the young woman's education proceeded, and her beauty grew. She was a success at Naples. Even Goethe after meeting her was moved to say that Hamilton had found in her 'the charm of all antiques, the fair profile on Sicilian coins, the Apollo Belvedere himself'—for Hamilton turned his classicism to good advantage by arranging a series of Attitudes for his mistress, illustrating ancient lore and fable. These were the subject of wide admiration, until, in later life, Emma's increasing size made them grotesque. After that the cartoonists, never delicate, made merciless fun.

Hamilton was in England in 1791, and in August that year, at an audience at Windsor, George III gave the necessary leave for his Envoy's re-marriage, while still in office. Emma became the second Lady Hamilton at Marylebone Church on 6th September. The scene of her triumph was not far from where she had once lived in seclusion with Greville. Then she had been known to his friends as 'the fair tea-maker of Edgware Row' and had been a favourite model for Romney. She is believed to have sat for him last on her wedding day as 'The Ambassadors.'

Nearly two years after the ceremony Hamilton wrote to Banks from Naples :

'Lady Hamilton has nothing to do with my public character, but Their Sicilian Majesties are so good as to receive and treat her as any other travelling lady of distinction. She has gained the hearts of all, even of the ladies, by her humility and proper behaviour and we shall, I dare say, go on well. I will allow with you that ninety-nine times in a hundred such a step as I took

would be very imprudent, but I know my way here, and here I mean to pass the most of my days that I have a chance of living. Without a woman, you can have no society at home, and I am sure you will hear from every quarter of the comforts of my house.'

Hamilton was then sixty-three ; Emma was still in her twenties.

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It was war that brought elation, disaster, and Nelson to Naples. The future admiral paid a brief visit in 1793 to seek help and troops for Lord Hood's brief campaign at Toulon. The mission was successful, though the episode itself ended starkly enough by the Neapolitans being driven into the sea, along with their allies. Five years later, St. Vincent sent Nelson into the Mediterranean in pursuit of Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt, the result of which was that he was able to annihilate the French fleet at Aboukir Bay, on 1st August 1798, in the most astounding night action known to history.

Joyous pandemonium broke out in Naples when the news reached the Bourbon court, and Vesuvius was for once rivalled in fireworks. The Queen, Maria Carolina, sister of the unhappy Marie Antoinette, execrated the French, and was only too eager to second Nelson's plea with her husband that he should conduct an heroic land campaign. The result, as might have been foreseen, was disastrous. Nelson's expiation was to conduct the Royal Family, the Hamiltons, and a vast treasure to exile in Sicily. The battered *Vanguard* arrived off Palermo on Christmas Day in the year of the Nile, and there began a melancholy period in the life of the Hamiltons, though Ferdinand found ample compensation, as always, in hunting the wild boar. His last act before leaving Naples was to ask for a sloop to turn back for more guns and dogs, and his first act on reaching Palermo was to ordain death or the galleys for those who trespassed in places reserved for his sport.

Hamilton, who was by this time on the edge of seventy and showing signs of severe ill-health, was at once sad and pressed : sad because his remaining possessions in Naples were looted, and many of his classical treasures, consigned homewards in the store-ship *Colossus*, were lost on the rocks of Scilly ; pressed, because the Court of Naples

was well and truly caught up in the struggle with Revolutionary France, and because he had the most forceful man in the navy living in his house whenever he was ashore, transacting business at all hours of the day and night.

Nelson and Emma Hamilton were ardent natures, and even in their ages they were not far apart. They had become lovers by the early months of 1800, and from that hour they lived for one another. Hamilton was not yet eclipsed. While he remained in Italy, it was through him that official business was conducted, and he did not leave for England and retirement until after Ferdinand had been temporarily restored to his mainland possessions by the strength of Nelson's squadron, at excessive cost in bloodshed, and with infinite loss of good will. Nelson's reward was a Sicilian dukedom; Hamilton's was a picture.

Relieved at last of his duties, Hamilton and his wife made a semi-royal progress across Europe with Nelson. They arrived home in the gloomy winter of 1800. Then, while Nelson made a gesture—it was no more—of resuming his former life with his wife, Emma took a house in Piccadilly overlooking the Green Park, and Hamilton once more tried to immerse himself in the pleasures of connoisseurship and learned enquiry. He was received with delight by old friends, but their number had by now diminished, and there was little tranquillity in any house of which Emma was in charge. Power and adulation had turned her head.

Early in 1801 Nelson separated from his wife for ever. In April Copenhagen rang with his name: by the end of the year he had acquired the estate at Merton in Surrey which he hoped to share with his devoted friends. But, as Lord Minto was quick to notice, Merton was turned into a Nelson museum of trophies, not into a house filled with Hamiltonian treasures, furnished with the taste natural to a member of the Society of Dilettante.

In 1802 Hamilton took his wife and Nelson on a visit to his Welsh estates. The excursion became a triumphal western progress in honour of the sailor, though Oxford, most fittingly, paid Hamilton the respect of making him a Doctor of Civil Laws, as well as the admiral. For Hamilton, it was the last flicker of activity. He had hoped to find some tranquillity in his final years, but it was not easy.

'I have passed the last forty years of my life in the hurry & bustle that must necessarily be attendant on a publick character,' wrote Hamilton to his wife. 'I am arrived at an age when some repose is really necessary, & I promised myself a quiet home, & altho' I was sensible, & said so when I married, that I should be superannuated when my wife would be in her full beauty and vigour of youth. That time is arrived, and we must make the best of it for the comfort of both parties. Unfortunately our tastes as to the manner of living are very different. I by no means wish to live in solitary retreat, but to have seldom less than 12 or 14 at table, and those varying continually, is coming back to what was become so irksome to me in Italy.

'Provided that our expenses in housekeeping do not increase beyond measure (of which I must own I see some danger), I am willing to go on upon our present footing; but as I cannot expect to live many years, every moment to me is precious, & I hope I may be allowed sometimes to be my own master, & pass my time according to my own inclination, either by going my fishing parties on the Thames or by going to London to attend the Museum, R. Society, the Tuesday Club and Auctions of pictures. There is no time for nonsense or trifling. I know and admire your talents & many excellent qualities but I am not blind to your defects and confess having many myself; therefore let us bear and forbear for God's sake.'

The end came suddenly, about a year after the letter was written. Hamilton, who had been active enough to dance a tarantella on hearing the news of victory over the Danes in 1801, died in his house in Piccadilly on 6th April 1803. He had asked to be moved there so that Emma and Nelson should have no painful associations with Merton. He expired in the arms of the two people he loved best in the world, 'without a sigh or a struggle,' in Nelson's words, and clear-headed almost until the end. Charles Greville became his heir.

Hamilton wrote his own recipe for happiness in a letter of 1792, addressed to his second wife.

'My study of antiquities has kept me in constant thought of

Hamilton on Volcanoes

the perpetual fluctuation of everything. The whole art is, really, to live all the *days* of our life, and not, with anxious care, disturb the sweetest hour that life affords—which is, the present. Admire the Creator and all his works, to us incomprehensible ; do all the good you can upon earth ; and take the chance of Eternity without dismay.'

It was to some purpose that he had read his Horace, and he could claim to have lived according to his precepts.

Hamilton did not forget his promise, and was buried beside his gentle first wife at Slebeck, on the estuary of Milford Haven, near to the house where, as a young man, he had begun life with her. Not three years after the death of his friend, Nelson lay in state at Greenwich, honoured with a nation's acclaim for his victory at Trafalgar. Charles Greville lived but a short time to enjoy his estate ; and only Emma survived, precariously, until a few months before Waterloo.

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